Restoration

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Restoration

by ewritesfanfics

Summary

Will swore he meant to hate Hannibal. After everything he did, Will figured it'd be easy to hate him. To mourn what he could've had with Hannibal.

He swore, that when Jack and him devised a plan to capture the rarest fish in the world, his ability to lure would be put to good use.

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Or, Will is released from prison and finds himself falling in love with the Chesapeake Ripper.

(Season two re-write, starting from e07)

Notes

hi thanks for clicking!!! this is a season two rewrite which will take me forever to finish so don't hate me pls

hope you enjoy!!! constructive criticism appreciated!!! :D

Yakimono

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will carefully applied his jacket over his shoulders and back, gaze fixed ahead at a brick wall. The brick wall, which encased and captured him. The metal bars on one side of his new-room, which reminded him of his location.

Of his forced penance.

“This is very sudden,” Will states to a now-still Chilton. He glances down and pretends to be entirely enthralled by his action of buttoning up mentioned coat.

“The federal prosecutor dropped all charges… since you were not, convicted of killing anyone,” the man replies. Tone annoyed. Defeated. *Embarrassed* . He inhales. “The basis for your sentencing to this institution is null and void. The Chesapeake Ripper has set you free.” Chilton’s voice was now sarcastic, teasing. There was no remorse for his keeping and torturing of Will. Of an *innocent* man. Will understood, without even needing to turn and see , that Chilton didn’t feel guilt because he truly believed it wasn’t his fault. Will suspected he generally was right. He thought he was getting into the mind of a well-known, insane killer. Will’s (an innocent man’s) trauma was disregarded. As always. “Mazel Tov.”

Chilton glances over and away from Will—who, fairly enough, wasn’t looking at Chilton anyway. A buzzer sounds. A door unlocks. Will, ignoring the race of his heart, steps forward towards his bars. His hand reaches out. It pushes. The door swings open enthusiastically. A goodbye; a good-luck.

It had been forever since he’d seen the sun. Since he’d felt the pain of being outside in the snow. Gratitude swept his legs out from under him, and he plunged into thoughts about reliving his entire life again.

Will was reborn.

“I would love nothing more than to see you trade places with Dr. Lecter. I have no intention on ending up on his menu,” Chilton continues to a half-listening, half-day-dreaming Will.

Will takes a step. He was *free*. He was *out*. It was *over.*

“Well then confess, Frederick,” Will spits out. “Might be the only thing that saves your life.”

“Confess to *what*?” Chilton questions, offense and annoyance plaguing his voice.

Will was walking (*f ree. Away. Out* .).

“Confess to bonding to Hannibal Lecter over your shared practice of unorthodox therapies. Dr Lecter with me, you with Abel Gideon.”

Chilton follows behind Will, who was walking a little too fast for a man known to try and keep his cool. For keeping his emotions buried. For being smart, rather than reactive.

He recalled the needles. He remembered the way that Hannibal shoved Abigail’s ear down his throat. He remembered the agony of thinking he killed his daughter.

Not your daughter , his brain reminds him. *Someone you decided-to-become-one with’s daughter.*

“Gideon is playing his own game; was wheeled out of that hospital by the Chesapeake Ripper. Curious what bargain they struck,” Chilton hurries out. Already trying to use Will’s ‘remarkable,’ *innocent* mind.

Will slows against his better judgement, high on the confidence of knowing he would no longer be captured. No one would take his dormancy as a window to jump and throw him back into a cell. He was *free*.

He turns his head over his shoulder, “No, there’s no bargaining with the smoke.”

“No, Gideon’s dead.”

Will turns fully. “You’re next.”

“Unless I unburden myself?” Chilton quips quickly, somehow not affected at all by the fact that *the most wanted killer in Illinois wanted him dead* .

“Confession is good for the soul… shine a light on your relationship with Hannibal Lecter. He works in the shadows. Deny them to him,” Will replies, pauses, remembers where he is. Who Dr. Chilton is. What he, and everyone else had done. He inhales, turns, “tell Jack Crawford everything.”

“Are you suggesting I kill my career before Hannibal can kill me?”

Will begun shaking his head immediately in a defensive disagreement. Completely misunderstood. *Stupid* . “I’m suggesting you convince Jack Crawford however you can,” the profiler corrects, putting his glasses up and onto his eyes. Needing to be doing something. Needing to leave; to never look back. An inhale, and Will turns, smiling at Chilton with pretend amusement. “Like your life depends on it.”

He walks away. He knew his way out. Chilton didn’t follow this time, but called from behind him: “why did Hannibal not just kill you?”

Will turns. “Because he wants to be my friend,” he responds. He turns again, towards his escape.

He leaves.

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On his way throughout the BSHCI, Will thought about his home. His dogs gave him hope, and he prayed that Alana had taken good care of them. He imagined Winston, nestled in Will's arms, panting and satisfied and tired from jumping all over the owner he'd been without for so long. Tears stung in the back of his eyes, reminding him how *good* it'd feel to be home.

He'd have to go back to working for the FBI. He didn't want to, but he would definitely be needing the money. Above all, Will hoped his house was okay and ready and waiting for him. He looked forward to catching up on bills. To doing regular, *innocent* adult things. To sitting on his bed, Winston by his side, in a house that was warm and toasty and—

"You need a ride?" Asks a leaning Jack Crawford, supported up by a stairwell.

Will slowed, stopping halfway to Jack. Hate gently caressed the soft ridges of his mind, tempting him. "Was gonna call a cab—"

"We found Miriam Lass. Alive."

Will shuffled. Ignored the small tinge of fear when he realized he didn't really care . He just got out of prison, and Jack wanted to immediately throw him back to work? As in literally *right then and there* ?

"Catch the Ripper?" Will deflects, because he doesn't want to think about Lass. Or dead bodies. Or Hannibal; free, planning his next hunt.

Jack slowly shakes his head, amused smile on his lips.

Will reaches up, scratching a non-itchy forehead softly. Needing to fidget. The guilt finally comes back, and he realizes Jack had found his missing colleague who, like Will, got lead to her defeat pursing Jack's win . "How is she? Miriam."

Jack shifts and stands, arm resting on the stairwell still. It slides down, “traumatized.” He starts walking towards Will. “Miriam thanked me. After we found her. Thanked me for not giving up on her.”

And Will understood . Jack was guilty, too. Had put Will in prison. Of course Will knew this, but the guilt was unexpected. Jack was stubborn and a sore-loser, and because falling to his knees and begging for forgiveness went against that part of his personality—the one that didn’t feel that bad about Will’s imprisonment—he used Miriam as a metaphor.

He was right, too. He should have kept trying. Should have kept looking.

Should’ve investigated *fucking* Hannibal .

“But I had… I had given up on her and I gave up on you, too,” Jack finishes, three feet away from Will. Will blinked, hiding emotion. Wanting to run, go home, and *see his fucking dogs*. “I thought she was dead,” two feet. “I thought you were crazy. And I gave up on trying to find the both of you.”

Will straightens to appear more professional. Inhales. Forces himself to, if anything, give Jack a temporary forgiveness. He needed to put his hatred and anger aside, and focus on what mattered.

Catching the son of a bitch who put him in here.

He nods. Gives a small, amused smile. Pettiness seeps into his bones, and he walks around to lose the feel of Jack so up-close-and-personal. Approaches a cell. “You didn’t have to find me Jack,” he taps on the metal. He starts walking away, towards the stairwell which Jack leant upon minutes before. “Just had to listen to me.”

Dogs. Warmth. New clothes. Bills. Good food.

Jack doesn't turn. He doesn't follow. "I put Miriam Lass in a room with Hannibal Lecter; she stated definitively that he is not the Chesapeake Ripper."

Will slows. Curses in his head for having to be stalled again . Looks over his shoulder and wonders if Jack was *stupid*. "That definitive enough for you?"

"No," he answers immediately. "It wasn't."

Will's shoulders relax; the headache he hadn't even known was there dissipated.

Jack believed him.

He was finally listening .

Will turns fully. Nods at a Jack who isn't looking at him. "Where'd you find Miriam, Jack?"

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The drive to the Chesapeake Ripper's private estate was long and quiet. Will glanced longingly out of the passenger seat of the car he was stationed in, dreaming of his dogs. Of his home.

God, he hoped his home was okay. He hoped that Alana took good care of his strays. They didn't deserve to be parted with Will.

Eventually, the car rolls to a stop. Will, wishing he could be anywhere but here, pops open the passenger-side door. The cool air greets him harshly. Reluctantly, before he could beg to just go home, he crunches his boots into the snow below him. Jack had finished rounding the car as Will secured the passenger-side door shut.

“The property was condemned years ago. Apparently… the Ripper has been using it since that time,” Jack prompts.

Will glances around at the bright scene before him. The blanket of snow complimented the atmosphere angelically. It sat atop tree branches and watched Will innocently from the sidelines. It was *everywhere*.

He and Jack closed in on the building. It was kept tidy. Will knew then that Jack presumed the Ripper’s work starting here sooner rather than later was due to that fact. No house could stand so gracefully on its own.

Now in its basement, Will glanced around. There was next-to-no odor. The foundation was primarily wood, and well-kept wood, at that. The forensic team worked idly at certain aspects of the crime scene. Pictures were snapped every now and again, illuminating certain corners and crevices with white, only to darken yet again. Will ducked below hanging gadgets and metals, letting the scene further expand. He glanced down into a hole in the floor. Perfectly rectangular. There was a thin layer of water amongst the underground tunnel’s floor, and water dripping from the walls around it, too.

“Will,” Jack breaks Will out of his observation. He looks up and over at Jack, and yet again remembers that he is at a crime scene right after getting out of prison .

Jesus, he needed to grow a backbone.

“In here,” Jack finishes, head gently bucking behind him to indicate follow. Will indulged after a quick, final look around; committing image to memory.

The next room over was filled with surgical equipment. Will slows, surprise and non-surprise taking over his emotion.

Because it made sense, but he hadn’t thought about it before. Not like this.

He passes Jack, glancing over marked surgical tools for later investigation by the forensic team. A look to his right.

His heart *plummets* .

The glass which had supported different slivers of Beverly Katz' body were held in the corner. Pots on pots of blood to its right. Will, already emotional and tense altogether, feels himself repress a shudder. Guilt washes over him.

Beverly died because of *him*. And yet, not because of him, too. She found Hannibal. Hannibal got caught . And he killed her.

Because Will led her to him.

"It's Beverly Katz's blood. He drained her before he froze her before he cut into her," Jack clarifies from behind Will. Will feels himself starting to shake, overwhelmed and guilty . Jack begins walking towards Will, who was now slightly turned to see him. He didn't meet his eyes; Jack wouldn't need Will's empathy to know what he was feeling. "Chesapeake Ripper's latest victim. He was found in the other cistern. The water in his lungs is what led us here," Jack finishes, passing over said-victims case. Will glances at the dead man before him, cut on the transverse plane of his body to only have an upper half; thoracic and abdominal cavities opened to home dozens of (toxic) flowers. He was spread along to look as though a tree was growing out from him. Or, no, that he was one with the tree. To show, too, that he birthed those flowers.

Jack takes the case file back from Will, then walking past him and up towards another hole in the floor. Will, following shortly behind, glances in as Jack shines his flash light into the hole.

"We found Miriam down there. She believed the Ripper brought her here to kill her. He was saving her to be his last victim. He knows… we're close to catching him."

"No—" Will shakes his head, now crouched besides the (prison) hole. "He's been caught before. Catch a fish once and it gets away…?" Will takes off his glasses, his right hand

holding them and shaking them to articulate his words. He looks up longingly. *Angrily* . “It’s a lot harder to catch a second time.”

Now, to do what he came here to do and *leave* . He closes his eyes, allowing the pendulum to swing back and forth. No Jack. No police men.

When Will’s eyes open again, he’s alone. The equipment around him fades to nothing. On a table, polite and new, laid flowers. They blossomed and bloomed into beautiful yellows and blues and purples and reds. Will watched them.

When he blinked, he was in Hannibal Lecter’s office. The tree he’d grown, the man who now blossomed toxic flowers for him, stood proud before him. He was beautiful .

And he was planned.

Will’s hand rose, full of a beating heart. The heart was circled and hugged by blue flowers. Will approached the man. He reached up gently, placing the heart inside the man’s chest as though putting a crown atop his prince’s head.

“I sowed the seeds… and watched them grow. I cultivated… a long chain of events leading to this…” Will watches as the tree began to bloom with white flowers. As though fertilized by the heart. “All of this… has been my design.” Will’s arms raise, proud of his beautiful creation. Of the man he birthed and tweaked and let sprout.

He closes his eyes. Miriam looks back at him when he opens them once again, down in her hole.

“It’s theater,” Will states, locking her up and in.

This time, when Will blinks, he’s crouched yet again by an empty, Miriam-less hole.

He hadn't created the tableau. He wasn't Hannibal. He hadn't grown a man into a toxic, flowering-growing tree.

"Every time the Ripper kills someone, it's theater."

Will's hatred returns. "The Ripper didn't bring Miriam here to kill her," like he hadn't meant to become Will's friend. "He brought her here for you to find," he only intended to shape him into Hannibal and get someone locked away for his crime.

Until he realized Will was beautiful. Until he saw that Will had a Darkness.

Will walked away from the hole. Jack's eyes followed, no doubt questioning if Will intended on elaborating. Will's not-so-neurotypical-ness prevents him from recognizing that he needs to. He glances around. He wishes to go .

"But the Ripper's not self destructive. He doesn't want to get caught," Jack finally perks up, remembering Will's difficulty with communication.

"He wants you to catch *someone* ." And it made sense. Hannibal had found something in Will, and had successfully gotten him out to throw someone else in, instead.

What did he want, next? A date? A kiss? Gratitude?

Will's stomach churned.

"Like he wanted you to catch me," Will continues bitterly. "Somewhere, in all of this evidence, you will find something that will lead you away from Hannibal Lecter."

"Miriam Lass has already done that."

“ Two years . That’s a long time to have Hannibal in your head. You can’t trust her, Jack,” Will’s voice almost plays on condescending, although meaning to convey pity. Jack felt Miriam deserved to be understood. He wanted her to be right, as to let such be his apology. For quitting. For stopping his search, assuming she was dead. “You can’t trust any of this to be what it seems,” Will finishes.

Jack glances around, exhaling.

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Will’s magnificent, white house shown in the sunset sky. Will clicked the passenger-side door to Jack’s car shut, admiring the building. He removed his glasses. Jack begun driving away, allowing Will to approach his house. His dogs started barking.

Oh *fuck*, his dogs .

Tears threatened Will’s eyes. “Heh, hey!”He excitedly exclaimed to his rushing dogs, whom of which practically tackled Will thanks to their numbers. He whistles them impossibly closer, letting out another exclamation of happiness.

Their fur was impossibly soft in the rough of Will’s hands. Each bursting with joy to the sight of him; as was he for them. Their eyes glinted in a way that Will had missed sincerely. Innocent and loving. *Loyal*.

The snow ahead of him crunches after Alana Bloom had stepped off of his porch and into the yard. “Welcome home,” she greets, tone upbeat and warm despite the more neutral set of her face.

Will didn’t feel like calculating. He didn’t feel like becoming Alana to figure out what was going on in her head. All he wanted to do was be himself, for once. For *one day*.

So, he glances up. His smile is passionate and unwavering, even if it isn't her presence which brightens it. "Thank you," he practically whispers. It takes him no time to go back to his focus: Winston. He pet the dog, and the others around him throughly. Making sure to apologize for a long deprivation.

Silence blankets over Will's land. It isn't unwelcome, and allows Will to tune into his family. Some had ventured off slightly, safety and security giving them no doubt that Will will *not* disappear again.

And for that, Will gratefully states, "thank you for watching them. They seem happy." His voice cracks in the slightest, almost unnoticeable way. Tears decide to push over his lower lids and track down his cheeks. The cold makes him want to stop; the warmth of his dogs does the opposite.

"Happy to see you," Alana corrects, fidgeting.

An unrecognized dog approaches Will. Will encourages its head up to get a good look, curiously questioning: "who's this?"

"Applesauce. She's mine."

Will gives her an enthusiastic pet. *Applesauce* .

"She likes applesauce," Alana finishes, as though reading Will's mind.

Alana begins towards Will then, leash in hand for her pup. Will smiles happily up at Alana, Applesauce on one of his bent knees and another sat at the opposite body part.

"I rescued her," Alana adds.

Will glances up at Alana with question. Admiration.

Hate .

He shoves the latter emotion down.

“Picking up some of my bad habits?” He jokes, pushing himself to a stand. He smiles around at the dogs which remained at his feet.

“Picking up your good habits,” Alana corrects. Will looks over to her, settling on her nose instead of her eyes. “You challenged my entire framework of assumptions about the way you are. The way I think you are.”

“Well, the way you think I am… isn’t always a reliable guide to who I am.”

The hate was rising again. Will didn’t *want* to hate Alana. He supposed that none of his colleagues fighting for his innocence more-or-less just did that.

It wasn’t hard to redirect his hatred. He couldn’t blame the others for their resolves.

Because Hannibal framed him beautifully.

(In his design.)

“I was wrong about you,” Alana replies.

“Because you didn’t believe me? Or in me?” Will asks, majorly out of idle conversation and minority out of offense. His smile is contrived. “Because you… let me question my sanity, my sense of reality?”

“Because you tried to kill Hannibal.”

Oh.

Will’s shock is, no doubt, evident in his features.

Alana wasn’t guilty for letting ‘The Chesapeake Ripper’ lock away Will. Hell, she probably was still on the fence about whether or not Will *actually* was innocent. She only recognized Will for one thing: his attempt at murder.

His attempt to murder his *captor* .

He nods. He wants to be mean . To fight back, tooth and nail. To remind Alana that he was let out because he was *innocent* .

When he realizes it won’t come out without aggression, he leaves it there. A nod.

“You’re wrong about him, Will,” Alana continues (for whatever reason).

“No, you’re wrong about him, Alana. You see the best in him. I… don’t ,” Will replies. Winston, in the nick of time, yaps at his feet. Will gives a strained smile, gratitude and anger fighting for dominance inside of him. Debating which should take over.

“What was done to you doesn’t excuse what you did.”

Will looks up briefly, allowing all of his hate and anger and resentment to practically shine in his eyes. He pets the dogs around him to ground himself.

It was bad enough that Jack didn't care to consider how awful Will's time in jail was. To throw him back into the field an hour after he was released.

Now Alana wanted to tell him he wasn't any better than the *Chesapeake-fucking-Ripper?*

"Are you going to try and hurt Hannibal again?" Alana questions (because, for some reason, Hannibal's safety is more important than Will's new-found freedom. For some reason, she couldn't see that Will, who would have died before hurting someone else, had tried to kill someone for a reason). "Is he safe?"

He looks up, recognizing stupidity and looking down upon the foolish woman before him.

This is how the Ripper views other people. Rude people. Not you. His mind idly reminds him.

"From me, or for you?" Will turns the question exceptionally.

Alana looks down. Bitter. *Stubborn*.

Will nods, angry and ready for a *god damn* nap.

Standing again, he continues: "He's dangerous, Alana. I suggest you stay as far away from Hannibal Lecter as you can."

With a final nod—no argument to be shoved in—he walks towards his house.

"Come on," he pitches softly, whistling for his dogs to tag along.

When he enters his home—dogs zipping past his feet and into his 'everything' room—he lets out an exhale he hadn't known he was containing. The door behind him swings on its hinges

and shuts.

His home looked just as it had before he was torn from it. Except, his dishes weren't piled in the sink. His trash, upon speculation, was empty. His fridge: stock-empty. His laundry was recently done. He knew without really having to question, that Alana had taken care of *more* than his dogs.

Gratitude and anger once again fought a battle inside him. He wanted to be mad at Alana, as he deserved to be. However, he knew that Hannibal was charming. He'd been charmed once, too.

So much so that Will questioned his *sexuality* after meeting Hannibal. After becoming his friend.

All in all, Alana took care of what she thought might make Will's house less unbearable. The trash would stink up the house for his dogs, surely enough. The dishes with their old food on them would do the same. And if they were to be left in the dishwasher, they'd take up unnecessary space. His groceries expired and would also ruin the cleanliness of the house.

She didn't know what to do with herself.

No, if that were the case, she'd do more than just clean everything for Will.

She'd break his house. Tear it down. Put his dogs in a pound to spite Will.

And there it was. Underneath all else, Will realized that Alana cleaned his house because, at first, she didn't believe. She wanted Will to come home immediately, to a clean house as an apology. There was no ounce of her that trusted that Will was the Ripper.

She, no doubt, fought for Will's innocence until the very end. Unlike anyone else.

Besides Beverly. Who's dead. Thanks to Will.

Will's hands covered his eyes. Everything hits him like a truck.

All of the sudden, he's unsure whether or not he's breathing. Hyperventilating, and dizzy, Will glances up through now-hazy eyes and locates his (made) bed. He clampers over to it, obnoxiously heaving on his way. He all of but tumbles into the soft plush, snowy shoes smearing dirt and *wet* onto the covers. His arms encircle his chest, head tucked down. His heart pounds and throbs and Will swears he's *dying*.

His sobs are wrecked and intense. They roll out of him like waves crashing against the shore. He breaks and breaks until he's practically comparable to grains of sand . His head already starts hurting, and he clutches over the middle of his chest.

Prison was impossible . He isn't even allowed to express himself when he's in his freedom. He can do whatever the fuck he wants, *finally* , and yet no one lets him.

He'll never be free.

He'll never get to just *be* again.

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It took four hours for Will to awake from his oxygen-lacking nap. His head throbbed. His heart still did, too.

He pushed himself slowly to a sitting position, for once forgetting that he'd ever lived anywhere other than this home. Than this bed.

He exhaled, walking now from his bed to his bathroom upstairs. He shed his clothes along the way. He showered in a heat so intense that his skin was a soft pink upon exit.

With a towel wrapped around his waist, and fresh, clean skin, Will debated his next move. He returned to his bed, sighing with exhaustion. He swallowed, remembering that he was dehydrated. Will thought about the walk to his kitchen and back, and decided that dehydration was better than the excursion. He laid his head in his hands, which were propped up on his knees.

'Miriam Lass stated definitively that Hannibal Lecter was not the Chesapeake Ripper.'

And, like a gift-wrapped present, he knew what he wanted to do.

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Miriam lived in an admirable house. When Will knocked, she answered fairly quickly.

She was about his height, if not slightly shorter. Her hair was wrapped up in a ponytail, blonde and shiny. She seemed on-edge. Although, she turned and allowed Will to enter calmly enough.

Will walked past her, gazing around at the room before him. Nothing too notable, nothing too bland. He turned when Miriam asked: "Are you an FBI agent?"

"No," he responds immediately. "Uh… I used to teach at the academy. And, uh, two days ago, I was an inmate at the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. Courtesy of the Chesapeake Ripper."

Will looks down. The name tastes like poison on his tongue.

Miriam's eyes had widened slightly, taken aback by Will's lack of sugar coating for the name. For the man who kidnapped her. She nodded and walked past Will.

“Well, the Guru told me the only person who had any practical understanding of the Ripper was you. But he didn’t mention you were a victim.”

Will’s brows furrowed together slightly. “Guru?” He asks, genuine confusion lacing his tone.

“Jack Crawford.”

Ah . “Oh.”

“He has a peculiar cleverness.”

Will nods absently. He doesn’t add onto that.

“The Guru tells me… that you don’t remember much about what the Ripper did to you.” Will began walking around aimlessly— pacing— needing to be moving. “I couldn’t remember either,” he continues, the sun illuminating his shadow and circling his person. It warmed his back and praised him. It reminded him that he was *free* .

“Couldn’t?” Miriam questions, noticing the past tense.

“Oh, I remember now,” Will says cooly. He thinks of Hannibal. The rage splits him in half. “Uh… not all of it. Pieces. I was… under his influence,” Will meets Miriam’s eyes briefly, seeing horror. She didn’t want to talk about this. Will didn’t care; he pushed. “He used some kind of light to induce a seizure response in my brain. It created blackouts and lost time.”

“I remember the light.” *Perfect* . “He, uh, would stand in front of it. At a distance from me. Silhouetted. Very still. He would listen to chamber music,” Both he and Miriam had sat. “I still hear that. And his voice. Low and even, would pull me to him. Like a current.”

Silence drapes over them, though not uncomfortable. At least not for Will—Miriam seemed to be recalling whatever the Ripper used to say to her. Recalling his silhouette.

“You and I are part of his design. He wanted you to be free. He wanted me to be free, too…” Will shakes his head and looks down.

Thoughts of Hannibal, manipulating and testing Will out of curiosity course through his head. Thoughts of Hannibal crying and missing Will after he inevitably puts him in jail—like it’s better for both of them—and then deciding Will would be okay to leave.

He controlled everything.

He *knew* Will *knew* and he set him *free*; unlike Miriam.

Miriam was not going to get the FBI against Hannibal. Will was.

No matter what it took.

“Neither of us are really free,” Miriam states, breaking Will of his thoughts. “He’s not done.”

Will recalls his breakdown. The fear and relief and everything else which *gripped* and *ripped* and *ate* his heart. He thinks of Miriam, having similar breakdowns. Whenever she gets into an elevator—too tight. Whenever she walks alone—too vulnerable.

He nodded and stood. “Thank you for talking to me anyway, it’s good to have someone who… *knows*. Kind of.”

He begins towards the door. Miriam remains in her seat, but as he turns his head over his shoulder to say goodbye, she’s offering a small, knowing smile.

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And Will no longer wanted to leave it to the FBI.

He broke into Hannibal's house, gun clasped in hand. The home was dark; Will settled for the kitchen shadows.

It took two hours—Will assumed (he didn't have a clock, but he used to be pretty familiar with Hannibal's schedule)—for Hannibal to return to his home.

He shuffled around, maybe kicking the snow off of his shoes. Will watched his person appear in the hallway. It walked to its fridge, and paused.

Shit . Will held up his gun.

"The same unfortunate aftershave."

Will stepped from the shadows. Hannibal's soft, smooth articulation slightly threw him off. It didn't quite wane his rage, nor clear the fog infecting his vision with red, but sent a familiar shiver down his spine.

"Too long in the bottle," Hannibal opened his fridge, like any other evening. Although, he faced Will as he did so.

Not at all worried about the gun.

"Our last kitchen conversation was interrupted… by Jack Crawford. I'd like to pick up where we left off. If memory serves, you were asking me… if it would feel good to kill you."

"You've given that some thought," Hannibal points out, releasing the fridge and allowing it to close yet again. He folds his hands in front of him.

“You wanted me to embrace my nature, Doctor. I’m just following the urges I kept down for so long. Cultivating them as the inspirations they are.”

“You never answered my question.”

Will shook, whether from the cold or the way Hannibal was taking small steps toward him, he was unsure.

“How would killing me make you feel?”

“Righteous,” Will decides, adjusting to get ready to shoot. His finger found the trigger.

Hannibal flinched unexpectedly, yet forced out a hurried: “Aren’t you curious, Will? Why you?” His eyes darkened, glancing between the gun’s barrel and Will’s eyes.

Attraction .

Will meant to shoot. He meant to watch the brains of the Chesapeake Ripper splatter behind the dead corpse of said man. He meant to do it after death. Again and again, until Hannibal too was broken for good.

But *fuck*.

Yes .

“Why Miriam Lass?” Not as much; not as *greatly*. “What does the Chesapeake Ripper want with you?”

“No, you tell me,” Will rushes out. Desperation coated the rage. Closure became a bullet on his need-list. He flexed the gun in his hand, position faltering slightly. He reminded himself that it was his shield, and refocused the gun up again. “How did Miriam Lass find you? You made sure no one could find you that way again.”

“If I’m not the Ripper: you murder an innocent man,” Hannibal deflects. “You, better than anyone, know what it means to be wrongly accused. You were innocent and no one saw it.”

His tone almost sounded remorseful. Not guilty, but annoyed with himself for throwing Will in jail.

“No, I’m not innocent. You saw to that.”

“If I am the Ripper and you kill me, who will answer your questions?”

God *fucking damn it*.

Hannibal had to get out of his head.

“Don’t you want to know how this ends?”

Yes .

Will smirks slightly, scoffing with no real humor. His stance fades yet again.

With the quickness of a man in distress, he steps sideways and extends one arm out with his gun clutched in it. He aims it at Hannibal, who shuffles away but isn’t afraid .

Hannibal looks sideways. Will cocks the gun.

Hannibal waits.

Even closes his *fucking* eyes.

He has so much trust in Will to not do it.

And where Will loses so much trust in himself, he discovers his love for the feeling of Hannibal beneath him. Hannibal's life in his hands. A life at his will. That he could end with a pull of a trigger.

He lowers the gun.

Will knew that Hannibal was the Ripper. Yet, curiosity flowed through his veins and turned him into his own kind of crazy.

He wondered what would happen if Hannibal lived. What would be the Ripper's next move?

He tries to stride away, to *give the fuck up* and *go home* because he suddenly feels like shit . This wasn't who he was. His empathy got so wrapped up in Hannibal that he became him.

This wasn't Will. This wasn't Will. This wasn't Wi—

Hannibal grabs Will's frame and tugs him back.

With an exclamation of pain, Will stumbles back into Hannibal's own body. He writhes and kicks and sputters. Hannibal smacks the gun from Will's hands effortlessly and pins either of his arms to his sides.

And Will realizes with fear—and *attraction*—how easily *Hannibal* could end *his* life.

The Ripper was out. Hannibal's person-suit laid shiny along the floor.

Will was not going to let himself go like this. No—he had to do something. There had to be *something* he could do.

Get somewhere safe. Call someone? Call the FBI?

Only for them to show up, Hannibal sitting pristinely at his table, Will stressed and babbling about Hannibal's ' real ' self?

He planted his feet, then made a motion similar to a jump. The force caused Hannibal to stumble back, his lower half crashing into his island. His arms faltered, yet were still too strong to wiggle out of.

" *Beautiful , feral* boy," Hannibal purrs.

Will's eyes widen, his brows furrowing. He swallows.

Huh ?

Hannibal takes Will's slowing movements as a window. He spins them around gracefully, effectively bending Will over his island. Will feels himself flush when his ass is practically *shoved* against Hannibal's groin.

Hannibal doesn't stop there, though, because of *course* he doesn't (was it not enough to just pin Will down?). He releases his hold around Will's middle, grips his hips, and spins the smaller of the two around.

Will's about to attack when Hannibal grips both of Will's wrists and *shoves* . Will gasps in pain, glancing up at the ceiling as tears bead at his eyes. His hands pressed so harshly against the shiny counter of Hannibal's island that he questioned if they were *broken*. Hannibal shuffles closer, redrawing Will's focus. In the same motion, he pulls both of the other's arms around himself, and uses one hand like a handcuff to keep Will's arms there.

Will swallows. Time seems to slow, the two looking at each other.

When Will moves from Hannibal's nose to his eyes; he catches the *admiration*.

The *love* .

"Do you not see it?" He asks.

Will's brows furrow, swallowing yet again. His wrists and arms were already starting to burn from the stretch of being behind himself already.

Hannibal's free hand reaches up, cupping Will's face. Will swears he could see the red forming all over his body.

"So *dark*. So *dangerous*. Your potential is *astounding* and yet you choose to ignore it. You wanted me dead, but you wanted me in pain, too. You probably would've shot me until none of me remained, yes?"

" *Yes* ," Will hisses between his teeth, a facade of confidence shielding his own emotions.

To Will's surprise, Hannibal *groans*. To Will's deeper surprise, he liked the sound.

"So, so *pretty* ," Hannibal coos, eyes softening.

Will finally gains his self-conscious, shoving his head in the opposite direction of Hannibal's hand.

When Will slowly turns to Hannibal again, he meets a warm smile.

"I think you should go Will," he glances down at Will's lips, almost regretfully.

"*Gladly*," Will says, voice quivering and breaking. He didn't mean for it to sound that way—but Hannibal's head lowered now and he could practically feel the Ripper's breath ghosting his lips.

He 'tsks' and closes his eyes, breathing in. "I cannot wait to watch you Become, Will. You'll know where to find me."

Will's brows furrow again. *He had no idea what Hannibal was talking about.*

And, hey, wasn't he wanting to kill him earlier?

What the fuck is happening?

-

Will existed awkwardly for two days.

Although, it was nice, too.

He was able to get more into a stable lifestyle. He rose around seven every morning. He'd let his dogs out of the front door to do their business, and then he'd make a small breakfast for himself.

The funds from his previous job at the FBI as a profiler had him stable enough. Sure, he'd need to acquire a job soon, but Will wanted to wait.

He'd just gotten out of prison, he deserved it.

After breakfast, he watched TV or read. Sometimes he'd go shopping.

Then, after he was spent from doing nothing all day besides appreciating his freedom, he laid in bed. Winston joined him both nights. They cuddled.

Will had no nightmares.

He did, however, have *two* dreams of Hannibal.

One was a 'casual' date. Hannibal took him out to lunch. Will tried to convince him to not kill anymore, since it was inconvenient for Will and *stupid* .

He woke up after Hannibal tried to kill him in response.

He didn't consider it a nightmare, since he didn't wake in a sweat. His heart raced, but it wasn't from fear.

And Will did *not* want to look into that.

In the second, Hannibal taught him how to kill. He explained how much he *missed* Will and why he got him out of prison.

Will woke in ‘happy’ tears and had to remind himself that he, as matter of fact, *hated* Hannibal.

Yet the man had made him feel so *loved* .

That was how Will realized that Hannibal had seen a murderer inside of him.

Already trying to ignore his attraction to the killer, he ignored that too.

Who cared!

On the third morning of crafting his routine, however, a *bloody* Chilton appeared clumsily at his door. Will had been letting his dogs out, per usual, when the man and (presumably) his belongings started towards him. Will’s dogs barked anxiously.

Will stopped, irritation and confusion spurring through him.

Because he *knew* Hannibal did this.

He fucking *framed Chilton*. Of *course* .

Hannibal had, no doubt, lined this up before he got Will out of prison. It was likely that he wanted Will as some kind of kill-partner (or, God forbid, murder-boyfriend), and because of that, he had to get someone else put into jail for his crimes.

Truthfully enough: he preferred Chilton in jail for the Ripper’s crimes as opposed to himself.

“May I use your shower, please?” Chilton asks, while being aggressively sniffed by Will’s pack. He was out of breath and shivering; either from the cold or the murders he was framed

for.

Probably both.

-

After Chilton showered, Will gave him a handful of oversized clothes to wear. It wasn't that Chilton was heavier, but Will definitely wasn't the tallest male out there.

Will sat himself in his kitchen. It was a chair separate from the actual table, more towards a doorway which led back outside. The doorway across from him led to a back exit.

"I have the same profile as Hannibal Lecter," Chilton said, fumbling around with one of his bags. "Same medical and psychological background. We are both doctors of note in our field."

Will wished he would *just fucking leave*.

All of this talk about Hannibal was reminding Will of two nights ago. When Hannibal brushed his cheek and looked at him with so much love that Will felt he may overflow. When he excitedly, and almost subtly, confessed that he wanted Will to be his partner.

To '*become*,' as he put it.

"*Of course it would be me*!" Chilton exclaims incredulously. His hands waved as he talked, overwhelmed. "Hannibal was never going to kill me. I'm his patsy! I… I have to leave the country. I *am* leaving the country!" He was so out of breath that Will questioned if he was hyperventilating. He was preparing to leave Will's house (*thank God*); it would do him no good, though, to try and leave.

Will called Jack.

He didn't know why, exactly, he was going along with Hannibal's framing. Perhaps it was because he knew he'd no longer get sideways glances from his peers. No one would question if the Ripper was him anymore.

True, *beautiful* freedom.

Then, Will could deal with (his feelings for) Hannibal.

"No, if you run, you look guilty," Will dissuades. He needed Chilton to not bolt, so as to make the arrest swift and easy.

"You did not run and you looked plenty guilty."

Will wants to argue how different that was. Will was mentally unstable and too involved in the cases for the Ripper that it made sense as to him looking like said killer.

"Abel Gideon was half-eaten in my guest room." Hannibal put human remains in his fishing lures. "I have corpses on my property." Will disappeared with Abigail—while unstable. "You just threw up an ear."

"There's an APR on you right now. They've canceled credit cards, they're tracing your phone…" and they're coming.

"I have cash and I tossed my phone. Jack Crawford thinks I killed two agents— *three* agents. You know what tends to happen to people who do that?" He was talking so fast, and yet Will was getting bored . "Shoot on sight."

"I'm going to prove Hannibal Lecter is the Chesapeake Ripper."

“I know you will. Then, when you do, I will read about it from a secure location and I will reintroduce myself to society at that time.”

Will’s dogs started barking.

Will looked knowingly at Chilton and bit back a smile.

Chilton, bewildered, walked past Will’s chair to investigate. Through a window, Jack’s car drove up towards Will’s house.

“*Will*…” Chilton starts, backing up and into the room again. He’s voice shook, high and needy. “What have you done?”

“I called Jack Crawford.”

In the end, Will couldn’t switch to believing that Chilton was the Ripper. Not only would it look insanely suspicious—like he’s *guarding* Hannibal—but it could put him in danger again.

So, he’d continue to pin the blame to Hannibal, yes. Hannibal *fucking* deserved it, anyway.

However, to *not* have Chilton put in prison or murdered was too much of an opportunity to miss.

“*No*…” Chilton whispered. “*No*,” he repeats, somehow even softer. Tears tracked down his cheeks. “*No*,” he began fumbling for his gun. “*No*,” he aims it at Will.

Will did not feel fear, and he realizes—minus the *love*—that this was how Hannibal felt.

Chilton would never shoot him. However, given the correct conditioning that Will was, he *could* .

He thinks of the tree tableau—the man with a bunch of toxic flowers.

It was me , he realizes.

Hannibal planted his seeds and watched me…

Become.

"*No*," he still sounded so desperate. He inhaled, face contorting with anger as Will rose from his seat. "No! *No*! No, stay there!" He pointed at Will frantically.

Will bitterly scoffs and whispers: "You're not a killer, Frederick."

But I will be. I am. His brain supplies with equal sourness.

Will walked out of the room. He needed to let Jack in. The anger and resentment he'd buried for Hannibal rose to the surface. Shoving open the screen door to his home, he steps onto his porch with fake amusement and sour energy coursing through his body.

"Why'd you come alone, Jack?" When Jack interrupts him with a "where is he?," Will asks again: "Why'd you come alone?"

" Where is he?! "

"Hey-Hey! I told you. Everything is not what it seems. The Chesapeake Ripper is still playing with us. All of us," Will being included in that 'all' brought a churn to his stomach.

His heart felt as though it were breaking.

He let Hannibal in, something he never does. They had a *child* !

Why? *Why* ?

'*Aren't you curious, Will? Why you*?' He recalls Hannibal asking.

All for curiosity. He wanted to see what Will would do.

Then, after locking him up, he realized how much Will was '*becoming*.' He took him out and threw Chilton in instead.

An apology just as much as an ask for an apology in return. He wanted Will to join his side, after apologizing for blaming Hannibal so publicly. Hannibal admired the bite on Will, but wanted it aimed elsewhere. Wanted it on his side.

What- *fucking*- ever .

"The Chesapeake Ripper is not playing all of us. Will; he's playing you."

Will knew that Jack wasn't meaning Hannibal. He knew he was referring Chilton. So he let it go.

Although, had he been talking about Hannibal, he'd still be correct.

Not that Will wasn't playing back, now.

“Jack *wait*—“ Will shoves him back in front of him after Jack attempts on walking in past him. “I’ll bring him out. He’s got a gun.”

Will turns, but Jack follows.

“Good,” he walks past Will into the house.

Will turns and decides to wait on the porch.

Fine , he thinks.

Invade my home again .

-

Will ran a small towel over the top of his head, ruffling the curls forming. Removing the towel around his waist, he places both into his hamper. He opens his closet, tugging out a baggy t-shirt. After he fits it over his head, he walks to a dresser. Finds plaid pajama pants. Shuffles into them.

After Chilton’s arrest, Will felt light. Almost *rejoiced*. He thought of what his next move against Hannibal would be, as to deepen their game, and figured he’d came up with a good idea.

He returns to his closet, opening it with a smug smile on his face. Tomorrow, everything would work in his favor.

No move could be made again him.

He picks out a light red—not pink—button-down shirt. He folds it, places it on the desk which held his fishing lures, and returns yet again to his dresser. He fishes out a pair of dark pants and a black belt. Similarly, he folds and lays them upon his shirt.

Then, he went to bed.

-

Will turned off his car and popped open the door. The air was chilly and bitter, as opposed to what would come. His hair was styled and recently cut (by himself, granted). He shut the door, allowing the cold air to brush his warm cheeks.

Sure, Will was going to stunt Hannibal, but it didn't mean he couldn't be nervous.

He walked up to Hannibal's building. His car honked twice to indicate lock.

-

When Will got to Hannibal's waiting room, he turned his back to it after knocking. To look more mysterious, maybe. (To swallow his nerves, most likely.)

He pretended to be appreciating the paintings upon the wall when Hannibal opened the door. Will could practically hear an intake of breath.

He turned slowly, almost as though not expecting Hannibal to be there.

"Hello, Will," Hannibal says, shocked.

Will takes in his face, appreciating Will and his form. Will had a suit jacket hung on one of his arms, feigning professionalism.

Will smiled .

“May I come in?” He asks.

Hannibal seemed to observe him more cautiously, now. He checked Will out.

Since Will was trying to charm him; he doesn’t hide his flush anymore. It accents his cheeks and ears.

“Do you intend to point a gun at me?” Hannibal asks, neither displeased nor pleased by the idea itself.

Will decides to take initiative. He steps towards and into Hannibal’s room.

“Not tonight,” he smirks.

The room looked no different than it had when Will used to go to therapy here. Or, well, have his ‘*conversations*’ with Hannibal.

The smell was the same, and Will cherished the relaxation it brought him.

Probably manipulated or groomed into him.

Whatever .

When Will realizes truly that Hannibal hasn't left yet (he had half-hoped Hannibal wouldn't have kept his appointments open, so Will wouldn't have to be confident. Alas…), he asks: "expecting someone?"

Hannibal hesitates.

"Only you."

Will's glad Hannibal can't see him—since he blushes and smiles slightly. He's glad he can't see Hannibal—because he doesn't want to know what Hannibal looks like right now.

He doesn't want to *want* .

"Kept my standing appointment open?" Will questions, reveling in the idea. Reveling in the thought of a desperate Hannibal. A *missing-Will* Hannibal.

"And you're right on time."

Will sighs. Shakes his head. "I have to deal with you."

He swallows.

"And my… feelings about you."

Hannibal stares holes into Will's back.

"I think it's best if I do that directly."

Hannibal starts walking towards him. “First you have to grieve for what is lost. And what has changed.”

“I’ve changed,” Will says, bitterly. Yet, not truly upset.

Incapable .

“You changed me,” it comes out like an accusation.

“The friendship that we had is over.” In its place, a new relationship has formed . “The Chesapeake Ripper is over.”

Will scoffs. Shakes his head, again. “It had to be Miriam, didn’t it? She was compelled to take his life so she could take her own back,” Will remarks to a scenario he’d heard previously. Miriam shot Chilton.

Will, too, tried to use murder to take back his life.

“How will you take your life back?” Hannibal questions, picking up on this. He seems to understand that Will is admitting that he no longer feels compelled to kill Hannibal.

He wants to know *what* he’s compelled to do with Hannibal, now.

Will turns to him. Closes their distance a bit more with faux confidence. “I’d like to resume my therapy.”

Hannibal smiles softly. Will ignores the butterflies in his heart.

Hannibal steps closer.

Will flutters his lashes seductively, looking up at the Ripper. Letting *him* see.

Accepting his becoming.

“Where shall we begin?”

Chapter End Notes

then they FUCKED 🗣️!!

Su-Zakana

Chapter Summary

Will webs their game further until he finds he may be in too deep.

Maybe—Just maybe—That's okay.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will rose with a crick in his neck; a telling of what to come.

Sliding out of bed, his bare feet graze the cool wooden flooring beneath him. He releases a sigh as it chills his naturally warm body. Runs his hands over his face.

As he got up, he recalls what he had to do today. Turning the doorknob on his front door, allowing his dogs to slip by and into the morning, brisk weather, he sighs again.

Jack had called him.

The conversation was brief. Will could remember it so vividly—majorly because of its length. The eggs, which Will was now cooking, were sizzling.

Jack had asked Will to meet up. When Will questioned why, Jack only said that he needed to speak to him about fishing.

Although Will was first confused, he comprehends now that Jack was using a metaphor.

He wanted Will to inform him on how to catch Hannibal.

He still believes; for *whatever* reason, Will is grateful.

And he intends on making a *brilliant* lure.

-

“I get it. The great outdoors,” Jack admires aloud. He and Will sat across a small circle of water, dipped below ice. To their left, different shaped footprints led to their seats. “I get the attraction… in *summer*,” Jack finishes lightly.

Will laughs, and it’s genuine. When it comes to performing his favorite hobby, it isn’t difficult to loosen him up alongside it. So: High on the knowledge that he is *believed* and fishing for dinner, Will shook with laughter. His curls flit here and there with the movement.

“Well…” Will starts. “It’s a lot harder to catch trout when the water is really cold,” he states matter-of-factly. Although—

“That’s another argument for summer, Will,” Jack points out, small smile complimenting his features. “But trout are supposed to be hunters—like, they should be chewin’ on my hook here.” Jack looks down and back up at Will to highlight the fish-lacking pole between them.

“Yeah. When it’s cold, their metabolisms drop and they’re not as hungry.”

Jack nods, looking down at the circle of water. “Yeah, so how do you catch a fish that isn’t hungry?”

Will recognizes the metaphor for what it is. They’d been idly chatting since they arrived here, and although Will does enjoy having company outside of his own to talk about his interest with, he does prefer that they *get on with it*. Will, despite his love for fishing, truly isn’t made for the cold—he wants nothing more than to be curled by a fireplace with his dogs.

“Change your tactics. Use live bait—“

Me , he implies.

“—that moves and excites them to action. You—You gotta make him bite even though he’s not hungry,” Will finishes. Getting Hannibal to fight would, indeed, be a *grueling* task. The man was known for sheer patience and emotional stability (*especially for a psychopath, of course*).

Will doesn’t mind the weight. He’d buff up and do what he had to. Hannibal is going down.

“Make him act on instinct,” Jack adds, impressed by Will, per usual. Will had gotten decently caught up in himself: The burden he was carrying, that he forgot Jack was there. He refocuses on the other man as he points out: “He’s always a predator.”

“You have to create a reality where only you and the fish exist. Your lure is the one thing he wants, despite everything he knows.”

The profiler knows he’s dipping into a more intimidate reality between he and Hannibal. Though, he doesn’t believe that Jack can truly comprehend it. Jack more likely sees his statement as a suggestion. Nevertheless, if the ‘*attraction*’ or ‘*love*’ or *whatever* Hannibal felt for Will is noticeable, it won’t interfere between their plan.

Or, at least, Will *hopes* it won’t.

“Make a wrong move… he swims away?” Jack questions, making a swaying motion with his hand like a fish swimming. Will’s grateful to get out of his head by appreciating the more immature gesture.

“Yeah,” Will whispers lightheartedly. “I’m a good fisherman, Jack.”

“You hook ‘im. I’ll land him.”

-

Will returns to his house late that evening. He and Jack fished for a while, first conversing about their plans for capturing Hannibal, then about more casual matters.

It was nice to have a ‘*friend*’ again—if that’s what Will wants to call Jack.

Their plan is meant to enact tonight. They discussed the basis of it over their fishing: Jack and Will having dinner with Hannibal, where they provide the meat and ‘*apologize*’ to Hannibal so the man doesn’t get suspicious.

The truth is that Will wants to do so *alone*.

While it’s logical to have the FBI there with him, Hannibal’s too smart himself to be fooled. He’d know immediately what was going on. Or, more so, that *something* was up. It was too out-of-the-ordinary to not be a set up.

So, Will calls Jack. The other answers pretty close to immediately, and Will’s immensely grateful for such.

“Hey, Jack, we need to push back the plans. I’m, uh…” he glances over at the bathroom across from him, focusing and stabilizing himself with the sound of rushing water. *This is something he had to do. It wouldn’t work the way he hopes it to if Jack comes*. “Not doing good. Mental health is all over the place and I don’t know that I can *perform* properly,” Will concludes alas. He palms the front of his face, majorly trying to subside the guilt pooling in his gut.

There’s a small sigh from the other end, and Jack replies: “okay. I’ll let Hannibal know that something came up—“

“No, no, I should do it. As the lure, it’s probably more proper. Build a connection to me more firmly. If you do it, and I just silently disappear for the night, he may tune me out. We don’t want him to forget the bait in front of his face,” Will reasons (because he isn’t canceling on Hannibal himself) with Jack. He knows that Jack, who’s desperate to get the Ripper thrown away for his crimes, will crumble easily to the reminder that Hannibal’s needing a distraction before they do anything crazy.

Will practically hears Jack nod comprehensively. “Okay. See you when I do. Then: we’ll reschedule. Rest up.” And with that, he hangs up.

Gratitude replaces guilt, as Will now knows that he’ll have alone-time to deepen Hannibal’s obsession.

When he threw Chilton’s career to the dirt, he did so for Will. He also requested an apology back.

Will intends to indulge.

-

Unfortunately for the younger man, acquiring a three piece suit would still take quite a while. Nevertheless, Will is almost positive that Hannibal won’t really care. He’s never cared before, after all. So, he put on a dark blue button-down, a black blazer, and black slacks to merge the outfit together.

As he exits his vehicle, he rounds the front of it to grasp his blue cooler from the passenger seat. Jack and Will had gotten three trout fish, one of which Will properly refrigerated for his home, and brought only two for he and Hannibal. They no longer need the third, as Jack thinks the dinner is canceled altogether.

With no trouble at all (besides a slight limp, since Will's muscles had only minutely waned over his period in prison), Will brings the cooler to the front of Hannibal's house. He raises a fist, gives a couple of rasps, and then allows the hand to return to his side.

It takes roughly thirty seconds for Hannibal to open the front door (which Will realizes he hadn't heard Hannibal walk to it. *Was he just standing there, waiting? And why does the thought make him want to smile?*).

"Evening, Will," Hannibal greets, glancing behind Will and around him. "Jack Crawford come up busy?" He questions.

Will inhales and smiles gently. He shakes his head. "I thought we would be better off alone tonight. So, I suggested… he stay home," Will quips.

Hannibal hums, small smile teasing his own lips. He widens the door opening and steps to the side. "Well! Do come in, Will. I'll prepare dinner. Would you like to do so with me, or do you rather waiting at the table?"

Pushing the cooler into the warm building, Will shakes his head softly to the offering. He finds himself intrigued by the idea of cooking with Hannibal, for sure, but as tonight is built for apologies, there would be no reason for Will to overstep into Hannibal's turf.

Once he's stopped the cooler, and Hannibal has shut the door behind him, he replies: "No, thanks. I'll wait for you." He gives his usual, flirty bat of eye to Hannibal. He (*wishes he didn't*) revels in the way Hannibal observes obsessively.

"Perfect. I'll take this," Hannibal responds, stepping behind Will. Will feels his heart pound a bit more frantically in his chest, trying to calm it.

Being in prison did nothing for his natural touch-starved self. If anything, it brought the need for touch to the surface for everyone to see.

Luckily for Will, Hannibal would love that. Will is sure of it.

Hannibal's hands glide down from Will's neck to his shoulders almost seductively. Will, honestly, didn't think Hannibal would ever be anything less than direct. Yet here he was, tempting Will subtly.

How interesting.

His hands dip to the front of Will, grasping the sides of the blazer and pulling toward himself. Will slacks his shoulders to allow the clothing to graze off of his arms.

"Thank you," he whispers.

"Of course. It'd be impolite to allow you to remove it yourself, as you are my guest."

"I don't think so. But I'm not as… pristine as you are, so, perhaps I wouldn't know," Will shrugs.

Hannibal folds the clothing onto his black clothing rack, then walking to the cooler and taking it in his hand.

"Shall we?" He questions with a smile close to playful.

Will gives his own playful bow, acting as though pulling up a dress in a courtesy, too. "We shall."

-

Not entirely sure how long it took Hannibal to join him at the table, Will got lost in his thoughts. He questioned his own every move, fearful down below all else that he'd fuck up and ruin everything.

Getting Hannibal in jail is going to be annoyingly difficult. It'll take time and immense effort.

Will just got out of prison and he doesn't really feel like doing all of that. Yes, playing along with Hannibal's insanity was entertaining…

But does it have to be so *much work?*

Footsteps and a chill of air as Hannibal grazes by is what breaks Will of his fear. He swallows, watching Hannibal set down a large tray between them. Hannibal, of course, sat at the head of his table. Will was sitting to his left, politely folding his hands in his lap.

"Truite saumonée au bleu, with vegetables and broth, served with a hollandaise sauce on the side," Hannibal explains. He uses two forks to lift a fish up and into Will's bowl, first. Secondly, his own.

Will has never heard of this dish, of course. The amazing smell which wafted off of the meal corrupts his senses and fills his mind with hunger. He eagerly raises his conjoined hands, separating them to clasp his fork and knife. Still, he waits, knowing it to be polite.

"*Beautiful* fish, Will," Hannibal compliments, sitting down after he'd pour broth into both of their bowls. He shuffles into his seat, getting comfortable.

"It was my turn to provide the meat," Will replies, offering a playful, small smile.

"More flavorful and firm than farmed specimens. I find the trout to be a very Nietzschean fish; trials of his wild existence find their way into the flavor of the flesh."

Suppressing a flinch of distaste, Will hums.

He wonders if Hannibal, too, finds humans to be '*Nietzschean*.' He questions if humans and their experiences also find their way into the flavor of their flesh. Maybe that was why Hannibal ate them.

Will mentally shakes the questions. *There is no reason to try and decipher why people as insane as Hannibal eat people*.

"I hope '*providing the meat*' doesn't mean you still harbor doubts about what I serve at my table," Hannibal, himself, questions.

Will glances over to Hannibal's nose. Forces his eyes to drag up and into the dark maroon glasses which Hannibal calls eyes. Swallows.

"No doubts, Dr. Lecter," Will assures.

"Hannibal, I insist," Hannibal corrects gently.

Will seemed to toss the idea over in his head, then gently nods to agree. "*Hannibal*. Only the, uh… wounds we dealt each other until we got to the truth," the man finishes.

"Which is why we need to move past apologies and forgiveness," Hannibal leans forward, hovering over his bowl and testing Will's acquaintance with eye-contact. Will finds himself fighting to hold it. "Chilton has many victims besides the dead. We will absorb this experience. It will change us. Well, we are *both* Nietzschean fish in that regard."

Ah, one question answered.

Great.

“Makes us tastier,” Will jokes, half-asking to receive an answer for his second mental wonder.

Hannibal, unfortunately, only brightly smiles and begins to dig into his meal. Will waits for Hannibal to take the first bite (which he does incredibly slow. Will could never comprehend why those of professional positioning love to savor their food like this. *Your taste buds would pick it up regardless of how long it sits on the tongue, so who cares*?) before he personally begins to dive in.

The meal, *of course*, is *fucking* incredible.

He gets his answer, then. However, it isn’t without bitterness. He chooses to stick stubbornly with his original positioning on how to eat your food.

Hannibal makes a show of closing his eyes, swallowing, then humming and nodding appreciatively. Because of course he does.

“I tried to have you killed,” Will starts, patting at his lips mannerly and swallowing the remains inside his mouth. He hums to the taste the residue provides.

“You thought I was a killer,” Hannibal justifies, eyeing Will carefully. He pops open their wine bottle, pouring each of the two a small amount into their wine glasses. As he does so, he continues: “The greatest crime now would be to walk away from what we’ve shared and suffered. In many ways, we need each other. We are the only ones who will know what this feels like.”

One of the more strange aspects that their relationship developed: they pretend Will doesn’t *know*. For *whatever* reason, Will isn’t entirely sure.

The only time he’s gotten close to an ‘I’m the Chesapeake Ripper, Will,’ was the time Hannibal praised his ‘*becoming*.’ Ever since then, it’s been *Chilton* this, *Chilton* that.

There simply is no way that Hannibal doesn't know that Will is *aware*. Hannibal showed his violence to Will almost a month ago.

Will, for certain, has *not* forgotten.

Then again, Will could potentially be the blame. When he mentioned that he'd like to resume his therapy, he acted as though he believed Chilton to be the Ripper. Maybe it is actually Hannibal whom of which is going with the flow.

Will, *nevertheless*, makes himself share eye contact with the man once again. He offers a small smile, chuckle, and shake of head. Hannibal was ridiculous.

Pretending Will doesn't *know*. Pretending he doesn't have *attraction to Will*.

Then again, *not* pretending at all. He's never been one to be ashamed.

He was also telling Will, straight up, that Will leaving what they have behind would be a '*crime*.' That they will work through it *together*.

Will looks back to Hannibal and relaxes to show comfortability. A weight he was unaware that he had been carrying felt lifted.

He felt *seen*. And *oh*, what a *beautiful* feeling to be *seen*.

"This fish is *delicious*," he replies alas.

Work together, we will, he implies.

“Isn’t it?” Hannibal praises back, understanding and *seeing*. *Knowing*. Loving.

Will turned back to his dinner, as did Hannibal, and they ate each other’s apologies and forgivenesses.

-

Three days after his refreshing dinner with Hannibal, Will is called in for a case. Surprisingly enough, Hannibal was called first.

According to Jack, he wants Hannibal to believe that Jack and the bureau still have their walls up with Will. Therefore, calling him immediately back to work seemed out of ordinary.

Will doesn’t mind. He’d spent his three free days fishing and playing with his dogs and watching television. It had been so long since Will has been able to do such simple things, and he enjoys basking in the simplicity. Wake up, let the dogs out, eat, fish, watch tv, make dinner, sleep. *Easy* schedule for an *easy* man.

Dressed passionately for the weather, Will arrives at the location he was given. Apparently, a woman was murdered and then stuffed into the uterus of a horse. Inside of her: a live bird. The rebirth of the girl, both symbolically through her ‘c-section’ of the horse, and through the bird which her true life was ‘passed onto,’ is what Will immediately assumes is the intention of the murder.

He passes the stables inside the barn he was entering calmly. His heart isn’t racing, he isn’t feeling panicky.

The *lack* of feeling is what concerns Will. Whether because he no longer has encephalitis which decreases his anxiety, fevers, etcetera, or because he doesn’t care and is desensitized to murder up to this point, Will isn’t sure.

He pauses and opens the case file to give it another glance over.

Three days ago. Murdered. Will questions the *who* and the *why*. More specifically: *why* did someone benefit from murdering this girl and, arguably, making an *art piece* to resemble rebirth through her death? Why kill her in the first place if he *wanted* her to be *alive*?

Something perhaps had to be wrong with the girl. An illness, of sorts. The horse was likely ill, too, and maybe the bird as well. Or, no, the bird wouldn't be ill. If it were to represent the girl's rebirth, it'd be *perfectly* healthy.

So, their killer liked animals. Maybe saw them as a symbol. They'd care about the bird's health.

But they, no doubt, would also have to be guilty. This person wanted her to be birthed again because she wasn't doing well on her own.

Perhaps they were coerced? Convinced to murder by someone who used their guilt against them?

There were too many what ifs. Will's brows furrow as he tries to narrow it down. As he tries to *solve* and *recreate*.

He let the pendulum swing.

Now, where a beautiful horse stood proudly to Will's right, he pet her guiltily. She eyes him curiously— although, not *actually*: her eyes are covered. Will swallows.

"I don't want you to see me," he calculates. "I don't want you to see what I do. But I want to calm you. Comfort you. There's so much comfort in darkness, but not for one of you."

How would the horse go down? Will's mind questions. *If this killer felt guilty, they wouldn't want the horse to feel pain*.

A needle appears in Will's hand. He shuffles to press it against the horse's neck. After he's helped her to the floor, he looms over her lifeless body.

Next time Will blinks, he's carrying the murdered teen in his arms. He lays her beside the dead horse carefully.

"I took your life," Will states obviously. His brain works, corks and screws turning and calculating. "…And tried to give it back to you."

There was a bird cage suddenly beside him. He reaches to pull the satin red fabric up and off the cage, bird chirping and hopping excitedly as though not being led into a dead woman's chest.

Skipping the insertion of the bird into the girl, Will blinks next to the horse. "I find the womb, and place you inside." Will, now stuffing organs back into the horse which holds a human body that holds a bird, pants with the excursion. "I hope that the forces of death and biology will bring you rebirth," Will finishes, stitching up the horse. His statement comes out ragged and breathless, so tired and overworked and upset.

A blink; now back in an empty stable.

"It was a coffin birth," Will says to Jack, who had appeared beside him. He continues, "decomposition builds up gasses inside the putrefying body which force the dead fetus out of its mother's corpse. It's really more of a prolapse than a birth. But whoever did this knew the horse…" he licks his lower lip. "Knew she was dying because her foal was born dead. He knew Sarah Craber. He was familiar with the stables. He knew when he wouldn't get caught…" *which had to mean—* "and he works here. Or maybe used to work here. He has medical knowledge of animals but he's not a veterinarian. He—He considers himself a healer."

"How is *this* healing?" Jack questions Will mid-rant.

Will, honestly, thinks it's stupid he even has to explain that part. *Why else*? He recalls, though, not many people think like him.

Supposedly it wasn't common sense.

"Sarah Craber was reborn," Will answers. "This wasn't murder, Jack. This was grief."

Jack looks curiously at Will, who pretends he doesn't see him doing so. Doesn't want to meet his eyes.

"Come," Jack encourages, walking away. Will follows, brows furrowed in confusion. "We can conjure some records and find who all has worked here. You can let me know who, or what, you think did this."

-

Thirty minutes later, Will and Jack arrive at a barn house not too far from the stables. Peter Bernardone lives here, and is known to have worked with the horses quite frequently. Due to descriptions of mental illness and autism, Will's curiosity had peaked.

And here they were.

Bernardone has a horse himself, whom of which was galloping around happily in his wooden pen. The barn's tidy and neat.

He and Jack both exit Jack's car. When they knock upon the door, what sounds like a million animals start screaming. Dogs: barking. Cats: meowing. Birds: chirping. Monkeys: jumping. Chickens: squawking.

The door, though, swings open upon Will's fist hitting it. Cautiously, he steps inside what could be compared to a circus.

“Scare them when ya knock like that,” Bernardone pipes up softly, fidgeting. Will, surprisingly, actually feels guilty.

Not like this guy isn’t a killer, Will—Will thinks.

“Peter Bernardone?” Jack questions, glancing around in distaste at all of the animals. Will wishes he wouldn’t so openly judge. When he notices a shifty, nervous Bernardone, he says: “Sir?”

The slim, middle-aged man approaches a corner. He looks around frantically, shuffling and fidgeting and doing all else under the sun, it seems.

“You don’t seem to be curious about who we are,” Jack points out.

Bernardone looks as though he recognizes he *should* be curious. He silently clears his throat, nods a couple of times, and asks, “who are you?”

“I’m Agent Jack Crawford with the FBI. This is Will Graham. We’re here to ask you some questions about someone you may have had contact with when you worked at the Blackbriar Stables. A woman named Sarah Craber. Her body was recently found in… uh, unusual circumstances.”

Bernardone’s face twists into that of pain.

Guilt—Will catches. It’s gone as soon as it comes.

“I know,” he mumbles. “I know, I know. I heard,” he continues, looking away and down. Sadness and despair overcome Will’s emotions. He turns briefly to control himself—*he was not Bernardone. He hadn’t killed that girl and he wasn’t guilty because he did so. Because he didn’t. And he wasn’t Bernardone*.

“There was a bird in her chest. Did you hear about that?” Will asks, half to get himself out of his trance and half out of curiosity.

“Was the bird alive?” Bernardone asks, excitement and care laced in his voice. He looks up hopefully, silently praying—probably.

“Yes,” Will responds, Bernardone’s enthusiasm mixing with Will’s own emotions and showing through the word. His eyebrows raise slightly and he feels relieved. *The bird was* alive.

Except he was Will Graham. Not Bernardone, and he didn’t care.

“Who—Who—Who taking care of the bird?” Bernardone asks after his wave of relief. Will comprehends the need for perfect safety of the animal that Bernardone feels.

He’s about to answer, when Jack asks, “how well did you know Sarah Craber?”

“I didn’t know her,” he shuffles around again, nervous and guilty.

“Would you mind looking at a photograph?”

Fear.

Fear so intense that Will feels a shudder riddle through him. He barely stifles it.

“I…I know who she is. I said… I didnt—I didn’t know her.”

Will looks to Jack, who was pulling out Craber's picture to show Bernardone.

"Just… take a look to be sure?" Jack holds it up. Testing him.

Bernardone shakes his head, opens and closes his mouth, then shuffles awkwardly and anxiously. He closes his eyes, looks away from Jack, then extends an arm to grab the picture. Will watches the exchange curiously as Bernardone grasps the picture. He pulls it to himself, holding it tenderly in both hands. He opens his eyes and looks at her.

Then, as though she meant nothing to him, he passes the picture back in the same fashion as before (closed eyes, looking in the opposite direction, extended arm).

"Did you get your head injury when you were working at the stables, Peter?" Will asks gently.

"Yeah—" Bernardone perks up and shuffles to face Will. The talk of animals brightens his face and *almost* makes him look *cute*. "Okay. Kicked by a horse. *Boom*."

"That's an atypical motor response," Will points out. "Peter's abilities to look and touch can only happen as separate events. It's aggravated by stress, right?"

"Are you feeling under stress?" Jack questions, drawing the trap.

Bernardone's brows furrow and he shuffles. "*Yeah*! I'm worried about the bird—worried about the bird. I'm sad for her death. Sad for the horse. But I…I can only—only help the bird."

-

Outside of Peter Bernardone's house, Will sighs and begins. "Well, he knew the victim. He knew the animals involved."

“We’ll need a warrant,” Jack states, annoyed. It’s likely due to the fact that Bernardone *looks* and *is* so guilty, but they must prove it.

“I don’t know if he’s the killer, Jack,” Will half-lies. He knows Bernardone did it, sure. But with no coercion? Seems unlikely. He is way too unstable and in love with life and animals and health to hurt. To *kill*.

He was encouraged and inspired by someone else, no doubt.

“If he is, he never meant to be,” Will assures when Jack looks at him with disapproval and annoyance—like Will is stupid. “And if he isn’t, he knows who is.”

-

Will returns home and quickly hops into his shower. He washes the case and his day off of his skin, until it becomes a soft pink beneath the heat. The fog around his bathroom compliments the emotions he’s feeling beautifully.

When he gets out, he dresses down slightly to still look mildly professional and attractive. He had a session with Hannibal today, and sprayed his cologne against his skin and clothes carefully. He hopes it’d cover the aftershave that Hannibal complains about all the time.

-

“You were able to reconstruct this killer’s fantasies,” Hannibal’s pristine voice begins. Will shifts in his armchair. “One dead creature giving birth to another. The bird… his victim’s new beating heart. Her soul given wings.”

Hannibal looks off and into Will’s eyes in a way that causes Will to swallow. Hannibal’s eyes almost look *solemn*.

Impressed.

He, of *course*, thought the art of the scene was beautiful. A painting. No doubt, messy, but a good start.

Will wishes he could roll his eyes.

“Rebirths can only ever be symbolic,” Will states matter of factly.

“You’ve been reborn,” Hannibal replies, tilting his head to tempt Will.

Will blinks. “Wasn’t that the goal of my therapy?” He asks, pretending Hannibal wasn’t referring to his ‘*becoming*.’

Hannibal’s eyes glaze over with distaste, undoubtedly wishing for a different response. His lips separate with an audible ‘click,’ almost, as he changes the subject.

“How does it feel consulting with Jack Crawford and the FBI? Last time, it nearly destroyed you.”

“Last time, *you* nearly destroyed me,” Will catches himself spitting back. He doesn’t mean to. Anger rises and falls, and dissipates into nothingness.

They were past apologies and forgivenesses. They’d already done both a handful of nights ago.

But, okay, Will *deserves* to be angry, still. Hannibal has to respect that.

A smile comes and goes on said man's face. "After everything that has happened, Will, you still believe—"

"*Stop right there*." Will is out of control. Bernardone's and his own emotions conflicted inside him—now mixing with Hannibal's *annoying* ones, too. And *God*, he had to stop. Especially if he wanted to keep playing the game. If he wanted to *win*. But— "you may have to pretend, but I don't."

Hannibal tilts his head again, looking away longingly. When their eyes meet again, there's interest and attraction. "No, you don't."

Perhaps not playing the game still is playing the game.

However the fuck that works.

"Not with me," Hannibal continues, gaze softening.

Will supposes this was the truth. Will could refer to Hannibal all he wants to as the Chesapeake Ripper. But Hannibal could never know if Will has a recorder on him. Hannibal could never know if he has a mic attached to himself, where the FBI could hear and Hannibal couldn't see.

So, Hannibal could never agree.

But Will could always accuse and identify.

"I don't expect *you* to admit anything. You can't," Will says, his own stature softening in mirror to Hannibal's.

What a crazy thing understanding did to Will; relaxing and comforting him when even supplied by a killer.

“But I prefer sins of omission to outright lies, Hannibal,” a truthful Will continues. It is much better for Hannibal to softly edge around Will’s accusations as opposed to downright lying to him. To politely revert the conversation in a way which didn’t tell Will that he is *wrong*. *Especially*, in instances like these, where he is *not*. “Don’t, lie to me.”

Hannibal’s person suit slips warily as he observes a desperate Will. Will purposefully puts his emotions out there: the desperation, the desire, the need and the want. He wants Hannibal to see, and prays Hannibal will let him see back.

Will deserves to see.

“Will you return the courtesy?” Hannibal asks.

It was Will’s turn to tilt his head.

Ah, shit, he let Hannibal see a little too much.

Hannibal saw the game.

“Why have you resumed your therapy?” He asks, quirking a teasing smile. Because of *course* Hannibal Lecter would not feel concern from the fact that Will was *baiting him*.

Will thinks. After a beat, he replies, “can’t just talk to *any* psychiatrist about what’s kicking ‘round my head.” It’s truthful enough. It doesn’t quite admit that Will’s luring Hannibal, but it also says that Will only trusts Hannibal with the more luminous thoughts he contains.

“Do you fantasize about killing me?” Hannibal asks, not even bothering to cover the desire pursing through his eyes. Of course.

Will feels his own breath quicken by the idea. *Hannibal, beneath him, scratched up and bleeding out and on the verge of death. Will's hands clasped around his neck, taking it.*

In Will's vision, Hannibal understood. *And he* let. *He* accepted *and he* cherished.

"Yes," Will breathes out, showing Hannibal his own desire.

"Tell me: how would you do it?" Hannibal asks back, voice cracking in excitement and, no doubt, arousal.

Will smiles faintly, but feels Hannibal's arousal coursing through himself. He debates on getting up to hide a growing erection.

This wasn't normal. Normal people didn't get hard thinking about killing their psychiatrist.

"With my hands," he whispers back, licking his lower lip and holding Hannibal's eyes. The maroon is so dark and beautiful, it only quickens Will's heart beat.

"Then we haven't moved past apologies and forgiveness, have we?" Hannibal questions.

Will thinks about this, too. When his fantasy plays in his mind again, he recognizes the anger and the hurt. For Will would never kill without it. *Especially* not with his hands.

But for Hannibal, he would. He'd want to intimately strip the killer from his life for taking away Will's. For throwing him in prison; killing Beverly; driving him to murder.

Oh, *yes*, Will was still angry.

He wonders what he will have to do to *not* be. He figured that Hannibal's apology (throwing Chilton in prison for his crimes) and forgiveness (for trying to expose Hannibal to the FBI and coerce them into action… which Will, *actually*, was still doing) was enough.

He wants it to be. He may do anything to be free from his resentment towards Hannibal.

He shakes his head and smiles weakly. He suddenly feels very tired. "We've moved past a lot of things," he comments with a dry laugh. He bites his lip, stares at Hannibal's nose in thought, then releases the lip and continues. "I discovered a truth about myself when I tried to have you killed—" *I liked it*, he thinks.

"That doing *bad* things to *bad* people makes you feel good?" Hannibal's asks back, and the phrasing makes a warm shiver run down Will's back. He suddenly wishes Hannibal had said *he* is good for trying to do a bad thing to a bad person.

He nods softly and slightly sporadically, tingly with want and frightened by the vulnerability. "Yes."

"I need to know if you're going to try to kill me again, Will," Hannibal says.

Will thinks. The opening and exposure to admitting he wanted to harm Hannibal had relieved a weight off of his chest that he didn't know was there.

That weight? Hannibal's rejection and disapproval of Will not moving forward.

Hannibal is letting him in, comforting the side of Will which, justified, wants to hurt him. He is telling Will it was okay.

Will can feel the sting of tears in his eyes when he wets his bottom lip with his tongue. Hannibal's eyes follow. "I don't want to kill you anymore, Hannibal."

Hannibal very briefly experiences disappointment, so quick that Will almost doesn't catch it in his eyes. He'd be upset that Hannibal is disappointed in him, if he didn't know that it's only because he, too, fantasizes about Will killing him.

Perhaps, in the future, they'd have to playfully experiment so Hannibal didn't have to let the fantasy go entirely.

"Not now that I finally find you interesting."

Hannibal smiles. "I always pondered when you would come around to it, Will. What makes me unique is very similar to those around us."

Cannibalism and murder? Will isn't sure what world Hannibal is living in…

"We all have our desires," his eyes drag to Will's lips. Will watches with horror as they continue: down his chest, over the slight (*definitely slight*) bulge in his pants. Even down to the tips of his toes. They snap back up. "We all indulge."

"Even when they are morally incorrect?" Will asks. He knows they're not talking about murder anymore (which is ironic, since Hannibal had to have been originally referring to Will finally *knowing* who Hannibal is. Will always infects his train of thought, he supposes).

"Even when they are morally incorrect. We cannot stomp and kill them anymore than the next. We will always crave and thrive to capture and own," Hannibal longingly looks into Will's eyes. "Do you not have desires which you know are false? '*Wrong*'?"

You, Will thinks suddenly. He wishes he hadn't. *He really didn't want to think about his attraction to Hannibal. Really, really truly he didn't want to—*

"I do," his mouth betrays him. Hannibal quirks a smirk.

“And have you been successful in ‘*stomping*’ and ‘*killing*’ it? If you have, do you not still *crave*? *Thrive* on the idea? Wish to *capture* and *own*?”

Will swallows. He allows himself to reciprocate Hannibal’s previous action: glancing longingly at his lips. Down his brought, strict shoulders. The thick chest, no doubt littered in chest hair. The slimming of his waist. The slight (*definitely not slight*) bulge of his pants. His strong thighs; thick strong calves. The tips of his toes.

His eyes snap back up and he breathes (*arguably: practically fucking whimpers*) out: “No.“

Hannibal sighs through his nose as if this is just a *treacherous* outcome. As if his point was proven (*it was*) and Will was admitting he wanted Hannibal (*he was*). That Hannibal was reciprocating (*he was*).

“Then we are no different, truly. We have become one and the same.”

“That’s what I’ve been fearing,” Will chuckles out, reaching up to scratch the hair upon his jaw.

“Even now? Now that you understand and remember what it is to desire?”

Will thinks—he’s done a lot of this in this session. That’s supposedly the point, though, so he allows it.

“No,” he says finally, brows furrowing with the discovery. “No, not anymore.”

-

When Will returns home that night, his house feels lighter than usual. His dogs sleep peacefully in their beds in his everything-room. His bed lay made (he figured that future-him would enjoy coming home to a nicely made bed when he got back to his house).

He changes into the pajamas he laid out for himself, getting under the (*made*) covers and exhaling in relief.

Fuck, *he is so horny. And he hates himself for it*.

What kind of guy gets hard thinking about killing someone?

Yes, the righteousness of an-eye-for-an-eye wasn't wrong, necessarily.

But Hannibal practically held up Will's desire on a keychain, said 'look! You like this, right?,' and then admitted he felt desire for Will, too.

Even though he hates himself, he snakes a hand down his pants. He sighs with relief when his rough hand grabs his length.

Hannibal's hands would never feel this rough, he thinks in horror (*before he can stop himself, of course. He'd never have these kinds of thoughts if he had anything to do about it!*). His brain continues, his hand moves.

They'd be soft and properly manicured.

His head tilts back into his pillow further, mouth agape and eyes shut.

Fucking Hannibal.

His now-moving hand thumbs over the head, causing a shuddering Will to *whine* with need.

Will thinks about Hannibal praising him. *Telling him he was 'beautiful' and 'ferocious' when he tried to kill him a month ago. Telling him his righteous made sense and he was* good *for indulging.*

His eyes—beautiful, dark, and red—scanning Will's body. Debating how awful it'd be if he just took Will then and there.

When Will's head turns to his side, he sees Hannibal. Or his chest, rather—Hannibal was too tall for his own good. *Will instinctively burrows his head in that chest, inhaling spice, safety, forest, green, and fire. Hannibal coos at Will for doing so, one arm petting his hair and the other jerking him off.Will arches into (*both of*) the touch(*es*) involuntarily. It has been* way *too long since he'd last been touched at all. Especially so lovingly. So* intimately.

The soft hand moved upward, using precum to slide easily up and down Will's head over and over and over and over—

"'m gunna—"

"I know. Let it out, sweet Will. *Become*."

And so Will did.

-

The next day, early in the morning, Will is awoken by a viscous ringing. *Someone shot near his head—that had to be it. There is no way that incessant, annoying ringing wasn't coming from his ear. Which must've just been blown off. Who the hell—*

But when Will raises his head, no one is there. The ringing isn't in his ear.

Ah, it was his phone.

He slithers out of bed as gracefully as a fish would flop and jump when out of water, approaching the disaster which woke him from his beautiful sleep.

The word ‘Jack’ is splayed across the screen.

Fantastic.

-

Will gets to the crime scene, observing the multitude of dug-up graves. Blinding light encapsulates his vision occasionally—forensic and crime team snapping photos. Dawn was so far that the sky was blackened; streets were dead.

He ducks beneath bright yellow tape, approaches the decaying bodies, and fails to fight a scrunch-of-the-nose to their smell.

It is too early for this.

“Will.”

Will jumps faintly to an familiar voice addressing him. He swallows, turning around and gazing at Zeller.

Breath coming out in a mist—due to the cold—Zeller continues: “I owe you an apology.”

Saliva tracks down Will’s throat as he swallows again. He blinks and shakes his head. “You don’t owe me anything,” he says genuinely.

Sure, the apology would be nice, but his positioning on Will's sentence wasn't unjust.

Hannibal framed him *beautifully*.

Which is awful to think about at the moment—Hannibal. Will is learning he's *curious* about Hannibal now. Which is not good. What used to be disgust and hatred and attraction and arousal became just *attraction* and *desire*.

Will did *not* want to find out what'd he'd say or do the next time he's with Hannibal.

And, of course, what Hannibal *could* say or do to *him*.

"I thought you were a killer," Zeller's voice pulls Will out of his thoughts about Hannibal. "I didn't want to hear anything else. So, I wouldn't consider anything else."

"The evidence was… compelling."

"That didn't stop Beverly from questioning it. Maybe if she thought we would've listened, she would have come to us. She didn't," he holds his hand out.

Will, whose heart feels as though it is being *twisted* and *pounded* into a tight knot, takes it and shakes.

For Beverly.

It drops quickly (*Will hates physical touch*) and Jack appears from thin air. *The man of the hour*!

“We traced the soil we found in Sarah Craber’s throat to this vicinity. Methane probes did the rest. Found her empty grave…” Jack looks around him gravely. Sighs. “And fifteen others that are *not* so empty.”

“If Peter Bernardone knew about Sarah Craber’s grave, then he knew about all the others.”

Jack hums and nods.

“Let me talk to him, again.”

“When?”

“Don’t worry about it, Jack, I should do it alone,” Will holds up a hand when Jack’s mouth opens, face incredulous. “Trust me, please.”

He looks at Zeller—Brian—who turns and nods at Jack. “He’d be able to get the confession out of Bernardone in a way no one else does, Jack.”

Jack, who definitely was about to ask if he could at least drive Will there, sighs and shakes his head. “*Whatever*. Let me know if you get anything.”

-

So, after Will get’s home and enjoys his breakfast, he calls up Peter. Peter invites him over, and Will indulges.

-

“You said you were worried about the bird,” Will says, looking over to the caged animal. It was late in the afternoon—most likely five at this point. Will made sure to get the bird over to Peter, knowing it’d ease him up.

And Peter, of course, looks *thrilled* to have it in his vicinity.

“Thought you might like to see it,” Will finishes, and the smile that breaches his lip is real. More likely a reflection of Peter’s happiness, *but what does that matter? Will is smiling*.

“But, isn’t… isn’t it the evidence?” Peter asks, pointing faintly to the bird. His brows were furrowed with worry of breaching a law, or *something*.

Will huffs dryly, “I’m not FBI. I used to sort of be FBI. But now I’m *really* not.” The thought brings an amused smile to Will’s lips. Peter glances at him briefly, mirroring that smile and dry laugh, as well.

“I—I didn’t—didn’t kill… *Kill* anyone. I—“

“I know that,” Will says surely. Because he does.

Peter Bernardone would have never done this. *Alone*.

“But,” Will inhales, sighs it out. He searches for words. “It’s not always relevant. They found Sarah Craber’s grave. How’d you find it?”

Will worries he may scare Peter away with the direct accusation. That Peter *knew*.

To his surprise, Peter ignores him completely. He leans in to the bird, whom was chirping excitedly in its cage.

Peter deflects, “she—she’s already speaking to me.”

Will politely reverts back to their previous conversation. “This one’s spoken to you before.” He shuffles forward a bit: resting his elbows on his knees and observing both Peter and the bird. “At some point, almost every society believed birds carried our souls to the afterlife.”

Peter, smarter than Will took him to be, asks: “You—you think *I* think… This bird is—is Sarah?” *Perhaps*. “She’s gone.” *Hm*. “She’s everywhere and nowhere. She…”

Will stops beating around the bush.

Clearly, he didn’t have to. Peter was not fragile. He wasn’t a teacup that’d shatter under pressure. He isn’t a killer and he won’t be framed as one—

He will not be put in Will’s shoes.

“Tell me who killed her.”

Peter looks up, tears welling in his eyes from stress. His foot stomps quietly against the floor.

“I just wanted something beautiful for her…” His voice, so soft and sad, makes Will’s heart throb uncomfortably.

“You were grieving her. You couldn’t save her… But you could bring… Poetry to her death.”

“I wanted you to find me,” Peter replies, desperation laced in his tone. “I wanted you to fine me ‘cause if you could find me, you could—could… You could find… *Him*.”

Will's aware he's practically glaring now, trying to figure out *who*, but he doesn't bother trying to hide it. "Do you have a shadow, Peter? Someone only you can see? Someone you considered a *friend*. He made you feel less alone. Until you saw what he *really* is."

He was so *Hannibal* it made Will fight to keep Hannibal out of his mind.

Hannibal seems to be in there a lot, recently.

Fucking Hannibal.

"No… No one will believe me," he shakes his head, a few tears dribbling down his face. His voice cracks and shatters. "He'll make sure no one will believe me."

You Will not be like me. You will not taste imprisonment you don't deserve as I did.

You are not me. He is not Hannibal. It will not be the same for you, and therefore, I will ensure you do not get my previous fate.

Because I owe it to you. And me.

"I'll make sure they do."

-

Will visited the Bureau to simply pick up the case file and return to his home. He, in fact, does such successfully.

At home, he maneuvers a small, dim light over to his kitchen table and switches it on. He had no desire to turn on the '*big*' light—too bright and inconvenient.

He found just who he was looking for almost immediately after flicking through Peter's file. His social worker, Mister Ingram is more recently added to his file.

With horrible notes, one might add. Claiming Peter has fits of anger and other dramatic emotions which, Peter (*frail; caring; afraid; alone*), did definitely *not* have.

Although it was near to seven or eight at this point, Will phones the Bureau about this. He gets Zeller, who gets Jack, who agrees to get Ingram ready in the afternoon, tomorrow, for questioning.

With a dull hum, Will hangs up and sets his phone face down on the table.

He continues to learn about Peter. He researches and researches until he's sure he could probably get a paper test about Peter and pass with a one-*fucking*-hundred percent.

And, of course, he passes out atop it when the clock strikes ten.

-

Will, who apparently cannot catch a break, is woken by a gentle rasp at the door. One done by a knuckle, no doubt.

And *God*, *his neck hurt. His shoulders and back, too. Why—*

Ah, yes. He fell asleep at his table. Right.

He rubs both of his eyes with the heels of his hands, standing and marching over to the door. Luckily for him, he was decked in appropriate clothes due to the fact that he hadn't changed yesterday.

He clicks the lock undone, pulling it open and blinking away the morning brightness from his eyes.

"*Hannibal*?" He questions sleepily. Suddenly he wishes he bothered to tame his hair, brush his teeth, and maybe spray some cologne upon himself.

Hannibal doesn't seem at all tethered by how Will looks. He smiles softly down at Will—who blushes, because his body *hates* him, apparently—and finds his eyes. Will, to his surprise, doesn't care all too much. He holds the contact.

"Will. Good morning. May I?"

The brunette's eyes widen slightly, aware that he is being impolite by not inviting Hannibal in first. He side steps, swinging the door open more and allowing Hannibal (who gracefully walks inside and glances around longingly) in.

Will maneuvers the door shut behind Hannibal.

"Late night studying?" Hannibal questions.

Will follows his gaze to his kitchen tables, cursing beneath his breath and scooping up the scattered papers. He roughly shoves them—*unorganized*—back into their folder.

Tucking it up under his arm, he swallows and looks up at Hannibal. He notices, suddenly, Hannibal is carrying something.

His stomach grumbles at the same time that he recognizes what Hannibal has.

"*Breakfast*?" He whispers softly.

“Yes. May we?” Hannibal gestures to the table.

-

Their morning breakfast is quiet, otherwise interrupted by chewing or drinking or a clank of metal on metal as Will or Hannibal sets a utensil down. Will has just finished the *exquisite* meal that Hannibal prepared for him when he leans back in his chair and observes the other.

In the low, dim light of Will’s kitchen, Hannibal looks kind of… *beautiful*. The sun warmed half of his face, with his nose and lips casting a shadow on the other half. The illumination casts one eye a bright red and the other a soft maroon. He almost looks softer in this lighting —more *fragile*. His hands work a fork (an extension of himself) over sausage. He brings it to his lip, pausing briefly as he catches Will *ogling* him, and smiles as he takes his final bite of breakfast.

After chewing and swallowing (*and, notably, not questioning Will’s gaze*), he sets down his utensils and glances back up at Will.

“Jack has spoken with your killer’s social worker.”

“*Not a killer*—“ Will interrupts, but quickly realizes what Hannibal said. “*Oh*. And?”

“He’s on his way to the Bureau to be questioned,” Hannibal responds, starting to gather their plates together. Will realizes he should be doing this since it’s his house, and shuffles out of his seat to take over. Hannibal lets him. “I want to take you, please.”

Will freezes besides Hannibal, whom looks up at him with desire. Will stares at the beautiful feelings being manipulated into his brain—the mirrors which inspired emotion and showed Will what Hannibal felt. He swallows and closes his eyes to physically get out of Hannibal’s head. When he opens them again, Hannibal is smiling knowingly, and the desire is still there.

Turning to bring the dishes to the sink (*trying to ignore the nervous wreck he was becoming in front of Hannibal*), Will asks, “why?”

He sets his hands on the lip of the sink, looking at their empty dishes as though they were talking to him. Anything to not look at Hannibal (who, now, had pushed in his chair and took place behind a bent-over-his-sink Will. Enough space to be appropriate, not enough to be satisfactory for Will).

“Why not?” Hannibal questions back, tilting his head. “Are we not closer than we were before? Bonded by trauma and past basic human emotions? Left with none other than *desire* for one another?”

Will’s breath catches in his throat—Hannibal had to learn to have *shame*. *This simply isn’t okay. He can’t just say these things*.

“Please—“ Will whines. He meant to tell Hannibal to stop. To *beg* him to stop, actually. If he had to, he’d drop to his knees and pray that Hannibal would quit messing with him. Instead, he shakes his head and turns slowly. Pressing his back into the rough curve of the sink’s lip, he gazes at Hannibal’s nose. His lips. Forces his eyes up and into Hannibal’s (whose eyes practically sparkle when they meet). His lip trembles as he tries to find words.

“Indulge me, Will. Let’s go together. Let’s find the evidence to prove your ‘not-killer’ man an innocent one,” Hannibal purrs. He practically *puts his hand on Will’s neck and guides him to just relax and follow Hannibal’s lead*.

And Will, *of course*, *loves* it.

He looks down and breaks their eye contact. With a dramatic huff, he pushes off the counter and crosses the room to his front door.

“*Fine*.”

-

Will's nose scrunches up, listening to Ingram lie so inadvertently to Alana. From the other side of the wall, Hannibal stood beside Will and watched with him. Jack, beside *him*.

"You don't seem to feel sorry for your client. A surprising lack of empathy in a social worker," Alana comments, smiling enthusiastically although not amused. Will silently agrees with her from the other side.

He, also, tries to ignore Hannibal's wandering eye every now and again; observing Will and reading his mind.

They go back and forth. Ingram stresses his annoyance with Peter for blaming him. Alana reminds him they're just being thorough—that Ingram isn't being detained.

Alana reaches forward to grasp Ingram's hand (she had written something down; he got upset realizing it was probably about him; she wishes to comfort him back into being open). He practically flinches and melts away from the touch, sliding his hands out from underneath Alana.

"That's smart," Will thinks aloud. Jack and Hannibal turn their attentions to him. Will curses himself for not keeping his thoughts in his head, but continues: "She keeps pushing him on his feelings, not the facts. She's trying to gauge how comfortable he is with emotion—if he has any. He couldn't bear being touched by her," Will gives a small shrug.

Hannibal, beside him, hums in agreement. "Yes, his responses are typical of psychopaths during interviews but could also be resentment."

Will's lips pull into a thinner line, brows furrow along with the action. "No, his eyes are *dead*. He's a predator." He looks to Hannibal, who eyes him curiously. Nods, pursing his lips too.

Taking that as a sign to focus back on the situation at hand, Will turns back to Alana and Ingram.

Ingram claims that Peter was obsessed with Craber. Will's brows furrow yet again, face scrunching up in disgust.

What is this guy even talking about?

"Do you think Peter Bernardone is capable of murder?" Alana questions him. Will perks up to hear the answer.

"I'm not a psychiatrist, Dr. Bloom."

So?

Alana questions him on why he became a social worker, to which Ingram responds that 'society needs caring people.' Alana quips back with how society also needed psychopaths to 'keep the rest of us on our toes.'

And with that, Ingram asks to leave.

To Will's surprise, Jack just *fuckin*' *lets him*.

"You're making a mistake, Jack," Will calls out incredulously.

Jack slowly turns to Will, looking bored and annoyed.

He didn't *believe*. The feeling of being misunderstood and belittled once again was not an unfamiliar one. Tears stung his eyes—he willed them away.

When would they ever listen?

"I've got nothing to hold him on."

Will swallows. "Peter Bernardone is psychologically disadvantaged. He's been manipulated. As his social worker, this man is in a position of trust, and he has *betrayed* that *trust*!" He knows his voice is raising—he knows he needs to stop spitting and instead remain calm.

But Jack was *letting him go*.

"I know what it's like to point at a killer and have no one listen," Will finishes. He eyes Hannibal, who looks at him back. Hannibal, whose back is turnt to Jack, gives Will a *cheeky* grin.

"You pointed in the wrong direction," Jack retorts, tone sarcastic and annoyed. He leaves.

Will's eyes don't leave Hannibal's. Hannibal's don't leave Will's. They stare and stare for what feels like ages.

Will wants to smile—for some reason, Hannibal smiling at him like this makes him want to smile. But he simply cannot. Peter was going to die if this guy wasn't locked up—or worse—he'd be manipulated to kill again and they'd circle back here.

Hannibal's soft smile fades into one of sympathy. He *knows*.

"Home?" He asks, most likely aware that Will's dogs and safe space would help cool his irritation and disbelief of the scene which happened previous.

Will's brows furrow. Without thinking, he replies, "*no*."

Hannibal quirks a brow. Turning away from Hannibal, Will starts towards where he knows the exit to be.

Ingram had already left. Will swallows.

“We’re going to visit Peter Bernardone.”

-

The animals were gone.

“Oh *God*,” Will whispers, hand flitting to his mouth.

What did you do, Ingram?

Hannibal steps in short behind Will. Will flinches slightly when a hand squeezes his bicep.

He glances up, knowing he meant to tell Hannibal he shouldn’t touch Will. He meant to tell Hannibal that wasn’t appropriate and he should stop—even if he’s trying to give him comfort.

Maroon eyes meet the ocean, and blue eyes meet blood. He swallows, blinks his fear away, and turns back to the scene at hand. Hannibal’s hand drops.

With one last good look at everything gone, Will sharply turns to head towards the barns. He faintly hears Hannibal crunching through snow behind him, but ignores it.

Peter will be framed.

But *how*? Is the question. Will could easily tell the FBI that Peter's aggression came from whomever released all of his animals to the wild. He had to have been coaxed into—into whatever he was doing right now.

So *why*? How could Ingram so messily do this?

It was disgraceful. Hannibal has never been that stupid.

Will swallows and psychically shakes the thoughts away. He walks into the barn where—

"*Peter*," he whispers hoarsely.

Bernardone was kneeled before a dead horse. He was sewing her stomach up, hands covered in blood. There were faint markings of tears on his cheeks, and he shook with more to come when his eyes catch Will's.

Hannibal closes the door to the stables behind him.

Will approaches carefully, eyeing Peter. Peter removes their contact to stare at the task at hand. He sobs at the sight of the horse yet again.

But who—

Oh God.

"Is your social worker in that horse?" He asks before he can stop himself.

"*Yes*," Peter responds. When Will catches his face again, he notices an amused smile.

Ingram must've hurt this horse. Peter would have never hit her with—with anything. As he did the first horse, he'd put her down easy. With her eyes covered.

This one's head was battered up. It looked like it had been done by a hammer.

No doubt, this was justice. It must've felt amazing for Peter.

And if *he* were Peter, Ingram would be *alive* in there. He sucks in a breath, debating on if he should ask. If he even wants to know.

"I used to have—used to have a horrible fear of… Of hurting anything. But… He helped me… Get over that. Feels so abnormal," he half-laughs, half-whimpers.

"An abnormal reaction to an abnormal situation is normal behavior."

Will jumps—he forgot Hannibal was even still here; being so stuck in Peter's and Ingram's and even his *own* head.

"I think—think he deserves to die," Peter says with an indifferent shrug.

He did, Will thinks.

Was that him, or Peter talking, just then?

"But…" Will psychically shakes his head. "But you didn't deserve to kill him, Peter," he forces out. His eyes and heart soften at the scene before him. *So undeserved. He should've never let this happen. Should've not got lost in Hannibal's* fucking *eyes back at Bureau—*

He steps forward. Bends down.

“I want you to come with me,” he whispers comfortingly.

Peter looks back at Will, smiling weakly and letting out a quiet whimper of sadness again. Will offers his own polite smile.

They both stand (Will helping a shaky Peter to his feet; Hannibal close behind Will in case he needed to help, too). As Will starts walking Peter out, he notes that Hannibal did not follow.

Unfortunately, he’s more focused on someone else right now to care.

When he gets Peter back to his main barn, he watches the other shift uncomfortably at all the empty cages. He hiccups occasionally, and his face still looked freshly wet.

He stops, unable to bear anymore, most likely. Will stops with him, putting his hands in his pockets and eyeing Peter with care.

“What was done to you was… *cruelty*. For *cruelty’s* sake.”

Peter’s breath hitches and he attempts to find the correct words. He shuffles slightly. “I think I hate him.” The word ‘*hate*’ comes out so soft and slurred that Will *almost* misses it.

Will looks down at his feet, exhaling. His shoulders slump with the movement.

“I envy you your hate. It makes it easier when you know how to feel,” Will whispers—more to *himself* than Peter, really.

He wishes he still hated Hannibal.

Everything was easier when he hated Hannibal.

“What—makes *what* easier?” Peter asks, brows furrowing and feet shuffling.

Will’s brows lift slightly. He forgot he was trying to comfort Peter, not drag his own emotions into things.

Why did I say that? I shouldn’t have said that. Shouldn’t have even acknowledged my lack of hate for Hannibal, he thinks.

He swallows. Thinks. With a shaky breath, he says: “killing.”

But then Will remembers how he actually *didn’t* think Peter—

“I—I didn’t kill him? I just wanted him to—to understand what it’s like to… to suffocate. And to—to—to experience the destiny that he created.”

Shit.

-

When Will gets back to the stables, there’s two hands on the top and bottom of the horse’s recently-stitched belly. A dramatic stretch and organs come tumbling out. A man, drenched in blood, slithers out from the womb.

Hannibal had been petting a fucking sheep.

Will gets out his gun, hiding behind a Hannibal whose interest had finally been piqued—he crossed to stand nearer to Ingram. Will gets into position, aiming at Hannibal (but of course, aiming *past* Hannibal, where he knew Ingram to be).

"Mr. Ingram," Hannibal pitches when Ingram picks up his hammer and goes to swing it in anger. The man doubles back, panting and drenched in blood. "Might want to crawl back in there, if you know what's good for you."

Hannibal side steps, and Will gets a clear view of Ingram. Shakily, he steps forward and beside Hannibal, holding the gun out at Ingram. The other man's eyes widen, and with a look out of the corner of his eyes, Hannibal's own we're wild and coated with desire.

"*Officer*," Ingram pants, smiling weakly and sarcastically. He holds either arm out past his sides, dropping the hammer. Dramatically gets down onto his knees. "I'm the victim here."

Will's lips draw back in a snarl, ravenous and beast-like, revealing white, sharp canines. Social adequate pours from his skin and settles at his feet like a layer of shed skin.

"I'm not an officer. I'm Peter's friend." Said more to himself than to Ingram, again. A reminder that he is *not* Peter—Ingram didn't manipulate *him*—killing him would *not* satisfy Will. Not like it would Peter.

But he *had* been Peter. *He* was manipulated. And killing his manipulator *would* satisfy Will.

And, well, if he pretends to be Peter and kills a version of Hannibal in his head, *what harm would that do*?

Only another life taken by your hands, Will, his brain reminds him.

"Peter's confused," Will lowers his gun as Ingram starts to speak again.

He smiles for a millisecond, shrugs his shoulders back, then gets back into position.

"I'm not." A faint smirk. "Pick up the hammer," he whispers.

"*Will*," Hannibal says from beside him.

Will shifts the gun into one hand, cocks it, and aims.

"Pick. It. *Up*," he whispers again.

Ingram pants with fear below him. His eyes flit everywhere and no where at the same time—focus on Will's gun.

"It won't feel the same, Will," Hannibal says, voice laced with pity—almost like he wished it could. He approaches Will's extended arm. "It won't feel like killing me."

"It doesn't have to," Will bites back, all rage.

"You did the best anyone could do for Peter."

"Stop."

"But don't do this for him."

"*Please*." Will's eyes narrow in on Ingram.

“If you’re going to do this, Will… You have to do it for yourself.”

Ingram quickly stutters out: “P—Please don’t.”

“You would be wise to remain silent, Mr. Ingram,” Hannibal sneers, tone annoyed. He turns back to Will—Will can see his deep red eyes from the corner of his own—and softly whispers: “Will. This is not the reckoning you promised yourself.”

Will starts shaking. The rage filled every crack and crevice and suture in his brain. His finger fidgets to the trigger.

I’m going to do it, his brain says. *And God, it’s going to feel so good. Fuck Hannibal, he doesn’t know what he’s—*

But just before Will pulls the trigger, Hannibal tosses his hand atop the barrel. Will looks at him incredulously. Ingram covers his face and sobs. Hannibal’s other hand so gently covers Will’s wrist that he barely feels it. Hannibal eases the gun from his clasp. Holding it now, and licking his lower lip, Hannibal steps in front of Will. Will’s hand lowers, and he watches it, enthralled.

“With all my knowledge and intrusion, I could never—“ he reaches up and puts his hand on the side of Will’s neck. His hand is so large that his thumb is able to rest in Will’s hair and still encompass the side of his neck. He steps closer, tipping Will’s head back. “—*entirely* predict *you*.”

And he’s *beaming*. His eyes are so *bright* and *in love* and *aroused* that Will’s mouth falls open with the shock of feeling all of the same emotions at once. A faint gasp leaves his lips.

“I can feed the caterpillar… And I can whisper through the chrysalis, but… what hatches? Follows its own nature and is beyond me.”

Will swallows, getting lost in blood. It fills at his feet, sloshes up and soaks his pants through to encompass his thighs. It crashes into his stomach and enters through his belly-button, filling his thoracic cavity until it finds his heart and he and Hannibal are the only two men alive.

His heart is soaked.

His heart is taken.

“You’re beautiful, Will. I want—“

Will drives forward and kisses him.

Chapter End Notes

end has me screamin tbh

Shiizakana

Chapter Summary

> Will and Hannibal grow close in intimate ways. Will consents to Hannibal sending a killer on him, essentially, and after taking his first life for malice as opposed to intention and reason—they are even.

Chapter Notes

> this came out so much sooner than expected! hope you guys enjoy bcz a brotha is tired 😩

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will's alarm sounds at seven o'clock. He shivers through his wake, reality pulling him from his dream and tossing him into the real world again.

Sitting up sleepily to smack off his alarm, Will rubs a free hand over his face. The *incessant* ringing finally stops, and in a clear movement, he slides his glasses from the night-stand and figures them over his eyes.

It was getting *increasingly* difficult to wake up since he and Hannibal…

Let go. That is the only way Will wants to describe it. He refuses to be direct with his explanation and say that they took their relationship to an *intimate* level.

That they had *sex*.

He also refuses to admit that that night impacted his ability to wake up because he *always dreamt of it*.

If Will really wanted someone to know about their shared night, he would practically be able to recite *every last* fucking *minute detail*.

He slides his feet over the edge of his bed, letting them contact the floor. He couldn't really feel the floor, since he had socks on, but he knew it was there. That fact was grounding enough.

One thing that unfortunately carried through to the physical world of their night—the bruises.

Yes. *The bruises*.

Will saw them every time he glanced in the mirror. Now, while washing his face with cool water, he sees small indents of purple against his wrists. The low hang of his shirt shows off all of the sucked bruises and dark red and yellow bite marks littered along his collarbone.

Their night had been *far* from easy.

Which sucked, since it was Will's first time with a man.

Which *also* sucked. Whether Hannibal had ever been with another man previous to Will, he wasn't sure, but he *sure seemed* to know what he was doing.

Will isn't really even sure how it escalated the way it had. With his teeth clean and shower warming up, he tries to process for the one *hundredth* time *what* had happened.

They kissed. It was beautiful and soft, at first. Hannibal's free hand had found Will's lower back (he had bruises there, too, now) and Will's had rested upon the strong pecs the man owned.

When things started to get heated (Ingram had been able to run away in the midst of their kiss—they had practically started rutting against each other in the middle of that barn. Dead horse two seconds away from them. Dead-horse's organs scattered in front of it. And there they were: Hannibal using the hand on Will's back to lower to his hip and guide Will forward *again* and *again* until), Will pulled away and suggested they stop. Before it was too late. He babbled on about how he never meant for it to get that far, and Hannibal had whispered reassurance to him and took him home.

Then, as Hannibal walked Will to his door, it happened.

A-*fuckin*'-gain.

Will had unlocked his door and pushed it open. He walked inside, hung his keys, and then stared at a Hannibal who was standing on his porch.

Hannibal surged through the door frame and kissed Will again. There was no tenderness this time. In some fashion, Hannibal had to have understood that sometimes anger could be *fucked* out of a person.

So, that was what he did.

They kissed furiously, Hannibal aimlessly swinging one arm behind himself until he hears Will's front door swing shut. Will's vision was encompassed by his lids as they moved together—all teeth and tongue and lip. Hannibal grabbed at Will's hips, moved over the swell of his ass, and then *scooped* him up. Will yelped in surprise—he'd never forget the initial disgust he had towards himself at the noise and reaction; not like it'd be the last feminine one he made that night—and *laughed*. It was beautiful, even to Will's own ears. He was so high on the adrenaline and anger and *fuck-all else* that he just melted into the stronger man's hold and let himself be carried to bed. Like a princess. His laughs becomes giggles, then becomes a big bright smile on his lips as he was finally plopped (*thrown—practically*) onto his bed.

Hannibal, despite the fact that he looked like he may *kill* Will, was *glowing*. Will's empathy and Hannibal's mirrors-for-eyes had shown him how much he adored Will's laughter.

Will thinks they *both* needed the mental reminder of what tonight had to be, though.

Hard. Tough. Working out their differences and anger through the most *intimate* practice known to man. Getting it out of their systems.

Will climbed out of the shower, covering his head in a towel and giving a frantic shake to dry his hair.

He couldn't think of the rest. Not only had he dreamt of it anyway, *again and again*, but he had a session to get to.

The *last* thing he needed was a hard-on.

-

Since their *incident*, Will has really only seen Hannibal once. Their session the previous week was airy and sweet.

Will had never felt so nervous and excited in his life. He half-hoped that Hannibal would pounce on him again, but he hadn't.

Instead, it was almost… *loving*. The environment, the way they looked and talked to each other.

It was like everything had tilted on its axis, and Will realized he actually wouldn't want Hannibal to necessarily '*pounce*.' Perhaps, maybe, he'd instead give him a gentle kiss and one thing would lead to another. Hannibal would make love to him and this time it would be soft and gentle. They had fucked out their differences, and were left with just their attraction and *admiration* of each other.

Jesus, Will had to stop thinking. Especially like this. It was starting to seem like Will loved Hannibal.

Which he *definitely* did *not*.

There's nothing wrong with wanting to be handled nicely, Will would always reassure himself. *And you're simply comfortable with Hannibal, so of course, he's the only one you entrust with your body*.

It had nothing to do with love.

Will knocks on the door to Hannibal's office.

Hannibal opens it immediately, and as if on cue, he blushes furiously. It paints his tan cheeks and dusts down his neck (covered in bruises). Hannibal has never been one for shame, so just as he had the first time they had a session since the *incident*, he glances Will up and down.

When this first happened, Will had kind of set Hannibal up for it. He recalled wearing a more low collared shirt (and a scarf: incase someone who *wasn't* Hannibal walked by. He didn't need *everyone* to know he was covered *head-to-toe in hickies*, okay?) and watching Hannibal's soft maroon eyes scan his body. He recalls the "*delightful*," which had slipped his lips.

This time, though, he had the markings covered. There was one hickey below his ear, which Hannibal had found immediately.

And smiled smugly about.

It doesn't damper Will's mood, though. He clears his throat to grab Hannibal's attention (it does) and smiles sweetly. Bats his eyelashes. "Hannibal," he greets.

Will knows he should still be taking his therapy seriously (*even if he's sleeping with his therapist… Right?*), but figures it wouldn't hurt too much to flirt with Hannibal.

Besides, when he did it *now*, it wasn't to bait him.

It was to receive the same back.

And that he did. Hannibal softly looks into his eyes and backs up to open up the door more. "Hello, sweet Will. *Just* on time," he answers.

"Why *wouldn't* I be, Hannibal? Therapy is very important to me and my health," he teases subtly.

Hannibal gives a knowing smile, takes Will's coat, and directs him to his seat.

The unfortunate part about everything was that even though Will would prefer to talk more civilly with Hannibal (*about their days, or mornings, or maybe even hobbies. What Hannibal did besides… Well, murdering and eating people*), he still has to go over the things that burdened his mind.

Of course, he wasn't going to admit that the *incident* was majorly haunting him, but there were other things Will had to talk about.

Such as his guilt for *not* killing Ingram. He should have done it. Peter deserved to know his manipulator was dead.

But Hannibal had stopped him.

Ingram got away.

So, to start them off steady with some chat, Will swallows and gazes more seriously at Hannibal. “Do you have any regrets?” He asks.

Hannibal shifts and goes quiet for only a moment—thinking. “With every choice lies the possibility of regret.” *Okay, Hannibal*. “However, if I choose not to do something, it’s usually for a good reason.”

Will hums. He reaches a hand up to scratch the small stubble he owned—needing to fidget. “I’m… *Riddled* with regrets.”

Hannibal sits up straighter. “A life without regret would be no life at all,” he replies, tone dull but praising. Telling Will he was human, had a life, and that experiencing regret was a part of that.

Will wishes, *somehow*, that it didn’t have to be.

“I regret what I did in the stable,” Will exhales out, frowning. With Hannibal’s calculated head tilt, he knows Hannibal thinks he’s referring to their kiss. Or perhaps Ingram. Or perhaps both. So, Will continues, “Not… the latter events.”

So barely visible, Hannibal’s person suit opens up a bit more again for Will. He relaxes, no doubt now knowing that Will was not regretful of their night.

Which is silly. Wills has made it *abundantly* clear that he wants something like that to happen again.

But, *whatever*. If Hannibal has to hear it, Will is pleased to use his ability to speak for a good cause.

“Then, you were lucky I was there,” Hannibal replies sweetly.

Will's brows furrow. The reason he regrets is *because* Hannibal was there. He had stopped him.

Oh.

"Oh, no, no, *no*. Being lucky isn't the same as making a mistake," Will swallows shakily. Somehow, admitting this to a *killer* was hard. "The mistake was allowing you to stop me."

Hannibal's eyes shift and practically twinkle. Will remembers the breathy 'delightful' from Hannibal their first session after the *incident*.

"So," Hannibal starts, masking that twinkle again. As though Will doesn't already know that he's excited that Will is embracing a dark, inner nature. "It's not pulling the trigger you regret? It's not pulling it effectively?"

Will wets his lower lip (Hannibal follows the motion with his eyes, then drags them back up into Will's again). "That would be *more* accurate."

"You must adapt your behavior to avoid feeling the same way again, Will."

"Adapt," Will repeats, amused.

Because Hannibal is telling Will he should learn to pull the trigger as to not feel regretful again. To carry out *what* he wants to do, *when* he wants to do it, to avoid feeling regret.

"Evolve," Will pitches, shaking his head slightly. He was definitely evolving. He gazes longingly into Hannibal's eyes (who reciprocates genuinely). "*Become*."

Hannibal smiles softly: "Yes." Then, after a beat of silence, says: "I want you to close your eyes. Imagine a version of events you wouldn't have regretted."

So, Will does.

The black of his lids become a shivering Ingram in front of him. Will quivers with power. It strives through his blood and corrupts all thoughts and feelings.

Hannibal watches. When Will turns his head slightly to look at him—

He nods.

And when Will turns back to Ingram, his brains and blood are flying out the back of his head. The recoil from the shoot makes Ingram's body jolt backwards and into the horse guts with a squish.

"What did you see?" Hannibal whispers when Will opens his eyes again.

Will feels regretful. He feels spiteful. *Disappointed*. But he lets it go. Lets it *all* go—he can't do anything about it now. A sigh, and it's gone, floating up into the air and leaving Will's body. "A missed opportunity," Will says more lightly. "To feel," he continues, "like I felt when I killed Garret Jacob Hobbs. To feel like…" His voice drops to a whisper, shaking slightly: "…Like how I felt when I thought I'd killed you."

Hannibal shakily exhales with him. Swallows. "And what does that feel like?" His tone is practically next to seduction. Dripping sweetly like honey, coating Will's hearing like it would a warm tongue. Coaxing him out into the open. Coaxing out a *monster*.

"I felt… A quiet sense… Of…" Will fights for the words. There wasn't enough, there wasn't one to describe it. But there had to be, in a world full of words. A world made of words. "*Power*," he finds himself saying.

Hannibal smiles cheekily. “Good.” Will glances at him shyly—he knows, now, that Will has developed a small ‘*something*’ for praise. *Fucking Hannibal*. “Remember that feeling,” he encourages.

-

The weather outside is frighteningly cold. Will swears on everything that it hadn’t been this cold earlier.

After leaving Hannibal’s office, he stood outside of the beautiful building, glancing up at the dark sky.

Hannibal had invited him to dinner.

His air is physically expanding before him in a white cloud, cold air filling his lungs and distracting him as he tried to loll over the idea.

There was even no attempt at pretending Hannibal was not asking Will on a date.

‘*I’d like to see you in a less profesional setting, Will. I know you voiced that you’d be displeased to move onto another therapist even with our diverse relationship, because you trust me, so I’d like to ease your mind a bit. Consider me no more than a listener with, of course, a payment at the end of the day. But we could always discuss that, too—*‘

Will remembers his shock when Hannibal had even *hinted* at the idea of not charging Will for his therapy.

‘*Our on-paper relationship does benefit both of us, Will. To have me not as your therapist, and explore a more intimate relationship, we endanger each other—*‘

Because I could start talking about what you tell me, and vice versa, Will thinks. To not have patient confidentiality, all of Will's thoughts would be available through Hannibal's lips. Plus, with a new therapist, he'd have to pretend he wasn't interested in an insane man with impeccable taste. He'd have to pretend he wasn't infected. *Becoming*.

'*Regardless, I'd like to have you for dinner. Does tomorrow work for you*?'

It did. And it was set.

So now, Will wasn't just sleeping with his therapist—he was *dating* him.

Great. *Just* great.

"I tend to walk out of this building in a very similar state," says a woman approaching him.

Will glances over. The woman is about his height, with long brown hair and a minuscule but noticeable amount of makeup on her face.

She was beautiful. Will opens his mouth to says something, closes it, and stares awkwardly. He knows he should say something, but she is so—

"You must be a patient of Dr. Lecter's," she says after a beat.

"I'm sorry?" Will replies, brows furrowing.

"You look familiar. I either know you or I know of you."

Will nods with acknowledgement. Sighs. "I'm the, uh, guy who *didn't* kill all those people." He gives one last good look at her, then nods again and walks away—bitter.

Will didn't know which was worse: being '*some guy*' who helps the FBI but couldn't pass the screening process, or being '*the guy who didn't kill all of those people*.'

-

Hannibal's home was brightly white against the dark black sky. It shimmered. Its arms separate to encompass Will in warmth and company when its front doors open. Hannibal, stood clad in a matching, red, three-piece suit, smiles delightfully down at Will.

"Right on time," Hannibal praises.

Will flushes a light shade of scarlet. "Always am. May I?" He asks, eyebrow raising slightly in suggestion.

"Of course," Hannibal answers, side-stepping to allow Will in. He gingerly sweeps Will's blazer off of him, so he stood in only his navy blue button-down and black slacks. His shoes were new, just for this occasion.

'Course, *Will would* never *tell Hannibal this*.

A hand appears by Will's side, then, and Will glances at it in vague surprise. "I know where your dining room is, Hannibal," Will teases, hand overlapping Hannibal's politely.

"What kind of host would I be, to allow my date to wander aimlessly to my table?"

Will scoffs, hanging by Hannibal's side as he's guided to the room he's been in many, *many* times. "A horrible one, yes," Will responds. "*Terribly rude*."

“You know me all too well, dear Will,” Hannibal says, smile evident in his voice. He releases Will’s hand to travel behind him. He gives a soft tug to the chair besides the head of the table, gesturing to it. Will, of course, gives a small smirk and settles himself into it. Hannibal pushes it forward. “I made nothing fancy for tonight—I wanted to appeal to your taste. Do you mind?”

Will clasps his hands in front of him. “‘Course not. The meat?” He questions, eyeing the burger sitting in front of him. Even in its ‘*simplicity*,’ it was immaculate.

“My favorite, to appeal to both of our tastes, I suppose.”

“Are you suggesting I am starting to enjoy your private source of meat?” Will questions gently to a Hannibal who had just sat at the head of his table.

“Not suggesting: Telling,” Hannibal says, giving a knowing eye to Will.

Will snorts and shakes his head up and down. “‘Kay, sure. So, what’ve we got? American burger?”

Hannibal pulls his plate closer, Will mirroring the action. “Yes. One with cheese and ketchup. Painfully simple I’m afraid, you see why I had to add my favorite meat. I could never enjoy a dinner so greasy.”

“You think this is greasy?” Will asks, cutting into the side of the burger and waving it around slightly. No grease was visible on the bun, nor beneath it. It was as un-greasy as possible.

“Do you not?” Hannibal questions back, face slightly taken aback. Will‘s expression—*whatever* it was—deepened Hannibal‘s frown. He looked down at the dish and reluctantly cut into it.

“Thanks, anyway,” Will says after a beat. They ate their first bites together.

It was the best burger Will had ever *fucking* ate, of course.

Fucking Hannibal.

Will hums, giving a look of praise to an already-knowing Hannibal.

“I figure there’s something we should talk about, while we are on our first date and all,” Will perks. He clears his throat, pushing confidence to the surface.

“Yes?” Hannibal eggs on after a sip at his wine.

“Yes,” Will encourages. He searches for the words, despite the fact that he’d gone over this speech a million times on the way here. “The act stops, now.”

Hannibal tenses *minutely*, then finishes his bite and wipes at his mouth. “May you elaborate?”

“No more manipulation. No more pushing me into *murder*,” Will places blatantly. “I don’t know that you’re still going to pretend to not be the Ripper around me. I don’t mind, as long as you don’t lie. But if you’re serious, now, about whatever…” Will’s voice hitches. He clears his throat. “This is *becoming*; you will not lie. You will not manipulate. For ‘*better*’ or ‘*worse*.’ If I am to kill from here on out—ever—it will be because I felt it was right. Not because you were making me do it. Guiding me to see what will happen,” Will glares. “You will not treat me like a toy. You will not pull on my strings. You can manipulate and play with anyone else—but Hannibal—“ he leans forward, “—you *will not play with me.*”

Hannibal stares blankly. Will backs up into his seat again, beginning another bite of his burger. He’s chewed, and swallowed, and still not received a response. Warily, now, he sneaks a glance at Hannibal.

Hunger. Admiration. Pride.

Love.

Will's lips part gently at all of the intense emotions entering him, breath hitching. He closes his eyes to bask in them. Then, he forces them away. When he opens his eyes again, everything has cleared. Hannibal put them away.

"You grow more and more beautiful to me with each passing day, Will," Hannibal breathes.

For some reason, the response surprises Will.

Where Will told Hannibal to not give into his basic instincts of playing with his food, Hannibal found *beauty*.

Whatever *reason* or *way*, Will was grateful that his request didn't end with his *death*. That him telling Hannibal that he wanted to be seen as an equal, now, rewarded him with praise as opposed to degradation. As opposed to a reminder that Will, in fact, was *not*.

But that wasn't what Hannibal had said. Hannibal had accepted him as an equal.

"I…" Will trails off—Hannibal looks away. Continues eating. Will takes that as a sign to drop it.

There wasn't anything else that needed to be said.

-

Snow coats the grounds of Virginia, effectively blanketing Will's world. When he steps outside into the harsh, cold air, it blinds him by reflecting the sun's light into his eyes. He blinks a handful of times—

There's a car in his driveway.

Stepping towards it, hand coming up to allow his eyes more visibility, Will gives a small wave with his free hand.

The car, *of course*, was Hannibal's.

Will vaguely wonders if the man will ever let Will take himself somewhere again. He'd been called in to look at a case (a man mauled—yet not consumed—atop his truck), and had no idea how Hannibal knew this. Or how he got here so quickly from Baltimore literal *minutes* after Will got off the phone.

Hannibal steps out of his Bentley, gently tossing his door shut and approaching a still-standing Will. "Will, good morning. I got called in a bit ago by Jack Crawford for a case. You?"

Will scoffs and gives a light roll of eye. "Yes, I did too. Are you here to take me?"

"Afraid so. Hope that doesn't dampen any of your plans?"

"I can't turn you down now that you've driven two and a half hours to get me," Will comments, stalking up to the passenger side of the car. Hannibal follows and pops his door open. Will, deadpanning at Hannibal, climbs in reluctantly.

"Exactly," Hannibal replies, shutting the door behind the man.

-

Streaks of red glitter in the sun's light, illuminated by the white snow it was atop. There are the occasional yellow indicator of evidence labeled from one to… *whatever*. All red streaks and globs led to one large puddle—then slide upwards a truck to a mauled body. The chest of the man was ripped open and thoroughly torn, though *not* consumed.

Why? Will wondered.

The team around him snap photos every now and again, though the light isn't as blinding as it usually was (Will got pretty used to arriving on scene late at night or before the sun has rose).

Hannibal stood beside Will, observing the crime scene along with him. Will half-wonders if Jack called him first, again.

If he had, and Hannibal chose to pick up Will anyway, then clearly, he didn't mind *whatever-the-fuck* the FBI felt about him.

All he cares about is *Will*. Perhaps that's always how it's been, though?

Besides Will's knowledge of the fact that nothing was consumed, he assumes this was an animal attack. No human teeth could maul like this. And it wouldn't make sense, neither, for some *rando* to tear apart a man and leave him there. Not unless he was trying to spread a message, maybe…

"Since when did the FBI get involved in animal attacks, Jack?" Will asks casually, peering over his shoulder at the man he was talking to. Absentmindedly, he sees Hannibal copy the act from the corner of his eye.

"When there's somebody holding the leash of whatever it is that's doing the killing," Jack responds.

Of course, Will thinks. He feels somewhat silly for not even thinking of that.

No animal would attack without eating. Not unless it was provoked—and surely, this guy, on top of his truck, was not provoking some animal. This brutal attack was intentional.

So, *yes*, someone was guiding the animal to do it.

Why? The question still remained.

“Esophagus is destroyed. The bite almost severed his head!” Brian exclaims, amazed. He waves his hand towards the corpse to accentuate his speech.

“Whatever it was, it’s not afraid of humans. Not anymore,” says Jack, almost remorsefully.

“So I’m thinking a bear, or a wolf,” says Price, camera clasped in his gloved hands.

“Wolves or bears don’t eat where they kill,” Will corrects. “It’d have dragged him off.”

“Theres no eating here. We’re gonna find everything,” Brian reminds Will. Will gives a hum —so this… *couldn’t* have been an animal, *could it have? How would that be possible? Surely, you couldn’t train an animal to maul but not eat? Especially not something so not-domesticated like a bear or wolf*. Brian points to the corpse: “The viscera’s exposed, the belly’s laid bare, but there’s no sign of rutting or gnawing, Jack.”

To Will’s surprise, Hannibal perks up. “A rabid animal attacks victims at random and doesn’t eat any part of them.”

Price ignores the decently random comment of Hannibal’s, saying, “found the same wound patterns on a series of livestock mutilations in the area. Evisceration, dismemberment, yet everything account for.”

Will gives a nod—Jack and Hannibal and… *Jesus*, *everyone* was looking at him now. "Livestock mutilations… That was practice?" Will asks aloud.

"He's going to kill again," Jack states obviously. "He's gonna get better at it."

Will sighs. "And he's urbanizing his animal, moving it closer to the city… Adapting it for… Bigger prey." *Humans*.

"And," Hannibal starts, "he's not denying its natural instincts. He's evolving them." There was a familiar twinkle in his eyes—

Could Hannibal not use this random, *murdering-but-not-eating-killer* as a metaphor for Will's *becoming*?

"It's blood sport," Jack scoffs.

-

Will walks through the asylum that Peter is homed.

He figured, if *anyone* knew *anything* about animals—it was Peter.

So, after a brief conversation with Hannibal (it didn't take much from Will to convince Hannibal to take him places), they'd arrived here. Will, of course, told Hannibal to wait in the car.

Hannibal, *smitten as ever*, complied.

Peter was sat in front of a small, brown table. There was nothing but two blue cups atop it, probably filled with water. His hands were cusped in his lap, and he was leaning over them slightly—anxious. But when he sees Will, there's a broad, comfortable smile on his face.

"Peter," Will greets, genuine smile on his face. He didn't think that he could ever be friends with someone like he could be with Peter. Peter was sort of '*different*' like him in ways, and they got along well. Since the—*incident*—Will had gotten pretty close with him. Visiting him frequently, getting to know him.

It is always nice to be *seen*.

"Will—Will," Peter greets back.

Will places down the folder in front of him, on the table. Peter watches.

"I'm… Sorry that I have no way to casually lead into this," Will dryly scoffs. "There's been… Attacks. We think they're animal attacks, but we don't know what animal. I figured you were our guy. Do you mind?"

Please, please don't mind—Will begs in his head.

Peter's face scrunches up in disgust and fear, but ultimately, he sighs and deflates physically. "No… No, don't mind. Show—Show me, Will."

So Will did. He begun removing pictures and laying them in front of Peter on table. All were bite-related pictures. Peter knew animals extraordinarily well, so, he had to be able to determine an animal from its bite.

Or so, Will *hopes*.

"A wolf or a bear?" Will prompts.

He looks down to avoid eye contact and—

Oh. A rat.

Peter had a rat hidden in his elbow.

"Oh," Will voices aloud, small giggle bubbling from his chest.

Peter laughs along with him, curtly nonetheless. He seems glad for the distraction, if even for a brief moment. "Hey, hey, this is Keh—Kevin. Uh… Try not to stare. Or they'll take him away from me."

Will's eyebrows shoot up, and he quickly glances back at the papers on the table. "Oh, sorry," he apologizes.

"It's okay," Peter whispers, tucking Kevin away.

Finally, Will sees him firmly glance at the pictures. He only does so for a beat, before turning his head away and closing his eyes. Will discovered previously that, under stress, Peter had to have sight and touch come separate. Although he hadn't physically touched—he must've been emotionally.

Peter extends his hand over the first handful of photos: "Bear." Moves over to the right, where more photos lay: "Wolf."

Will's eyebrows furrow together. "Do bears and wolves hunt together?"

"Um—" Peter starts, looking up at Will, now, "I mean, you could—you could train… Train a bear to be a wolf. Or a wolf to be a bear. Train—Train them long enough… And they will

hunt together. Feed together."

Will notices that Kevin the Rat was climbing on Peter's chair's arm-rest. He's about to say something about this, when Peter quickly shuffles him back into a crevice in the chair.

"Okay," Will says, showing comprehension.

So, *two animals*?

Some dude was training two animals to hunt together but not eat? This made no sense.

"En—Enough—Enough… Time, there's… Theres a great deal I could train even you to do, Will."

Will smiles faintly.

It's a human. Will's suspicions are confirmed when, later in their conversation, Peter comments on how man is the only creature which 'kills to kill.'

And yet—the *why* was still persistent.

-

Will clambers on into the passenger side of Hannibal's Bentley. The car was already being reversed, no doubt heading towards Will's house in Wolf Trap.

"Hullo, Will," Hannibal greets quietly. Will puffs in response, feeling conflicted and lost in his head. "Anything new? Was Peter able to provide any clarity, for you?"

Will rests his head on the headrest of his seat. Sighing, running a hand over his face, Will nods slightly. Then, he shakes it side to side.

“Do you feel the same as before, then?” Hannibal asks.

Will vaguely wants to question how Hannibal even saw those movements—the man needed to focus on the road.

But, instead, he shakes his head side to side. “No. I mean, not really. I still don’t know why this person is doing what they’re doing,” Will waves his hands around throughout his speech. “*However*, Peter did make me realize that it’s not an animal at all. Before you—I don’t know, give me shit—I don’t know how a human was capable of leaving bites like that. Or mauling another human. But it wasn’t an animal. I hope you’ll just…” Will’s arms fall to his lap incredulously. He knows he must sound like he’s reaching. But, wasn’t that what Will usually did anyway? Connect things? “Believe me,” he finishes.

Hannibal gives a sympathetic look over his shoulder. “But of course,” he answers simply.

Will deadpans at him, although he truly did feel relief for the reassurance. “I don’t know why I even bother pretending like you wouldn’t follow anything I say,” he replies, bluntly.

“Me neither, dear Will,” Hannibal muses, smirking softly at the boy besides him. “Why do *you* think that this killer is doing what he does?”

Will sighs and looks at the hands curled in his lap. “I… I really don’t know. Maybe he feels a *connection* to animals? That’s really… The only thing I could think of.”

Hannibal hums. “Perhaps he makes a skull of some sort. Feels connection to both the wolf and bear, and makes his own intertwined animal. Then, he kills in that form. Satisfies his basic needs—one being to be a wolf-bear hybrid, the other being to kill.”

Will lips pursed. He rolls the idea over in his mind.

Yes.

Holy shit*, yes*.

He looks up at Hannibal, amazed, and Hannibal looks back at him with a look of tenderness.

“Do you see him, Will?”

“He works somewhere with fossils,” Will responds quickly. His fingers come up to point absentmindedly at Hannibal. “He steals them. Somehow. Maybe some kind of ancient version of the wolf and bear. Maybe just the basic, newer versions we know. Regardless, he’s taking them. He’s making his own animal…” Will’s brows scrunch, looking off and into his lap again—calculating. “No. A *mask*. He has a mask made of both of the animals. He’s killing for the reasons you said, yes. He wants to be this hybrid and he wants to be a predator, too. One which targets humans.”

-

Will inhales the tea in his head, sighing. It smelt amazing—though anything from Hannibal usually did.

“You know, you don’t have to be here,” Will prompts, gazing at Hannibal from over his cup.

Hannibal smiles and sits across from him at Will’s table. The room was dimly lit by a faraway light in Will’s bedroom. Otherwise, they were in next-to-black lighting.

Hannibal still seems to *glow*.

“I want to,” Hannibal responds. He gives a considerate hum to Will’s moan—*the tea was amazing*! “Do you wish me leave?” He asks.

Setting the cup down gingerly, Will folds his hands in front of him.

“I don’t sleep around,” he states bluntly.

Hannibal eyes him, sips his tea, then sets it down as well. He leans forward on his forearms, hands clasping together like Will’s.

“Neither do I.”

“So?”

“*So?*”

“What is this? What do you want?” Will asks.

Hannibal smiles softly, reading Will like an open book.

“*You*.”

The word curses his body, going straight to his betraying cock. He swallows, shuffling and lounging back in his chair.

“Okay,” Will responds shakily. “I want…” He swallows. “I want you too. I kind of hate myself for it.”

Hannibal's head tilts. "Why is that, Will?"

"You're…" Will gestures vaguely at Hannibal. "*You*."

The smile broadens on Hannibal's face. "Does who I am bother you? Turn you off?"

Will bites his lip and shakes his head. Disconnecting his teeth from his mouth, he replies: "No. You know it doesn't."

"So it is a battle of morality. What I do—Who I am, is against your morals? And that bothers you?"

Will swallows and eyes Hannibal through his lashes. "No, it doesn't bother me," he replies. "Not anymore. But, it…" Will trails off, thinking of the right words. It's only a beat later when he replies: "It is dangerous. By getting involved in what you do, I put my safety at risk. And I, inevitably, will want you to value your safety more than you obviously do."

Hannibal purses his lips disapprovingly. "I consider both our safeties to be of utmost importance. I would never let anything happen to you."

It's so vulnerable that Will's heart contracts in his chest. A beat skips, and two frantic ones take its place.

"You're very cautious," Will points out to himself, raising the cup of tea to his lips and swishing the contents around to get a whiff of its scent. "No one's caught you."

Hannibal hums. He mimics Will.

"*Besides me*. And I am not the only smart guy out there, Hannibal."

They both set down their glasses again.

“What is it you want, Will? That I *stop*?”

“That we run.”

Hannibal stills across from him. “*Pardon*?”

“Whenever. We don’t have to do it now. But I want to do it—eventually,” Will replies, a little too fast. “Get new names. Live somewhere anonymously where you can…” Will vaguely gestures again. “*Do what you gotta do*, safely.”

Hannibal raises from his chair. He gathers both of their now-empty tea cups and sets them in Will’s sink.

“Hannibal,” Will prompts, standing himself and pushing in his chair.

When he turns to face Hannibal, Hannibal is already there. He closes the distance between them, Will gasping into his lips.

Hannibal briefly parts them. “*Anything*,” a kiss, “*for you*.”

Everything picks up quickly. Hannibal grabs either side of Will’s face, deepening their kiss frantically. The only time Will ever saw Hannibal come apart was when he kissed Will—which had so far only happened two other times.

Will grabs Hannibal’s hips, tugging them forward and grinding his erection up and into Hannibal’s. There’s a pleased grunt from Hannibal in response, hands unmoving from Will’s cheeks. Will doesn’t mind this. He continues to *rut* and *rut* until he feels a small, wet rub of damp clothing against his restrained dick. Encouraged and horny and out of his mind, Will backs up and up until he finds his everything room.

Hannibal's hands move, then, grappling Will's shirt and hustling to remove it. They part briefly for it to fly across the room messily. The move is so *non-Hannibal* that Will lets out an amused snort into Hannibal's lips. They continue to fiddle their bodies together until nothing remained but their socks, Will's legs eagerly part to wrap around the backs of Hannibal's thighs. He tugs them towards himself, groaning when Hannibal's thick cock grazes his own.

"*Jesus*," Will pants out as they separate to catch their breath. "If you don't do something I think I'm going to cum like *this*."

Hannibal smiles predatorily down at him. He snakes his head down to previously bruised locations, sucking and biting until Will was nothing but a writhing mess below him. Frantically, Will slaps a hand around on the nightstand besides his bed for a familiar bottle—only used *once. Two weeks ago*.

He shoves the tube of lube against the side of Hannibal's bicep, back arching as Hannibal sucks particularly hard at his neck. Roughly tearing his head from Will's neck, Hannibal grasps the bottle and smears an intense amount onto one of his hands.

"Good?" Hannibal breathes out, pointer finger prodding Will's eager hole.

"Yes," Will pants. The finger continues to push gently, yet not enter. "Yes, *yes! Hannibal,* please*, c'mon*—"

A rough, shaky exhale escapes Will as he's penetrated. Head falling back, he looks up at the disheveled Hannibal above him. Hannibal stares back—reading every micro expression inside of Will to ensure his pleasure.

His finger curls, expertly rubbing the bundle of nerves inside of Will.

"*Ah, fuck*—"

“There you go,” Hannibal praises, leaning down to kiss Will’s cheek. It’s so much more tender than the first time he’d taken Will apart.

This time, each thrust of pointer finger was Hannibal working to piece Will back together. Even as the second finger prods and slips in, Will’s glue is drying. When three are inside, no longer thrusting but furiously rubbing Will’s prostrate, Will is renewed and nothing but himself. Strong and together.

His orgasm *rips* through him intensely. Back arching, hands both scratching Hannibal’s back and tearing through his bed sheets, face contorted into what definitely *cannot be attractive*— he cums between he and Hannibal. It coats his and Hannibal’s stomach’s in stickiness, but Hannibal seems to not be deterred whatsoever.

“You are so beautiful,” Hannibal whispers, kissing the lobe of Will’s ear. The fingers start thrusting slowly again, always missing Will’s sensitive prostate. “Coming apart for me like no other. There is no more beautiful state that I could see you in besides one as vulnerable as this.” A kiss to Will’s temple. “Utterly ethereal, you are, blessed Will.”

Will’s eyes lazily open to admire Hannibal’s. Hannibal leans down to kiss him gently.

“Are you going to fuck me, or make me do it myself?”

-

A soft peppering of kisses wakes Will from his stupor. He blinks away the sun from his eyes, and a handsome Hannibal is looking back at him.

Of course, even in slumber, Hannibal looks *prettier* than any other.

“Your phone has been ringing, *Mylimasis*,” Hannibal tells Will.

“Did you stay over?” Will asks instead, heart pounding appreciably in his chest.

“Of course,” Hannibal frowns. “What kind of person would I be to leave the angel to wake in his palace alone?”

Will snorts. “A horrible one.” Will reaches up to tuck Hannibal’s short bangs from his eyes, hand lingering and settling upon his cheek.

Suddenly, his brain processes what Hannibal had stated previously.

“Wait, it has?” Will asks, turning reluctantly away from Hannibal to look at his nightstand. Surely enough, when he presses the home screen on his phone, a handful of missed calls from Jack appear on the screen. Glancing up, the clock upon this table read 8:02AM. Luckily, the calls were decently recent.

When Will turns over, Hannibal’s showing his own phone in his hand.

“I made sure to answer it quietly. I was surprised, mostly, that you slept through your phone’s *incessant* ringing.”

Will smiles softly, settling down into his pillows again. “A case?”

“Yes. Your killer has struck again.”

-

Will walks front of Jack, peering at the scene before him. Two mutilated bodies this time—separated by one, *seemingly*, trying to run away.

With a deep breath, Will let the pendulum swing.

As he began walking toward a put-out fire, between the two bodies, the blood and torn body parts disappeared into nothing. The sun reverted to the East, sky splattering oranges and reds and pinks all over. The snow went from white to a soft yellow in the rays. A couple formed in front of him; young and sweet.

It was as they started to travel towards the boosting flames that the Sun went so deep as to disappear. The milky black of the sky was only illuminated by the moon, gorgeous and white as ever.

Will was in the forest, now. He was peering upon the lovers, clinging to each other for warmth and gazing into, no doubt, painfully bright flames. The man turned his head to catch the woman in a kiss. She giggled into it.

Instead of imaging himself in a mask—an actual creature stood beside him.

A Ravenstag.

Hannibal.

He and the Ravenstag watched together, occasionally meeting each other's eyes from curiosity. The pillowy black feathers of it shook with the wind. The soles he had for eyes were ever-watching. His antlers—beautiful, huge, and black.

"Kill," he told it.

And so it did.

The Ravenstag took off into the night. It breached out of the trees in a beautiful blob of black. The fire illuminated its dark, soft body, cute besides the fact that its head had tilted downwards and it was unstoppable.

It speared the man on its antlers. Cutting a deep, thick stripe up his chest, the man falls backwards and flops lifelessly to the ground. With the force of it, the woman falls as well—though unharmed. It shook and sliced and bit and stabbed until next to nothing of the bodies remained. Everything was askew from its original place.

When Will blinked—*he* was the Ravenstag. Large black antlers sprouted comfortably from the back of his head as his mouth dripped of blood. He let out a noise similar to a howl in exclamation. It was the first time he'd killed just to do it. The first time he'd done so because he just felt he had to—a basic, carnal urge.

But Will blinks, and it's painfully bright outside again. The snow mirrors the sun's light back into his eyes, and he blinks it back out, shuddering.

Will Graham. His name was Will Graham. He was not a Ravenstag and he hadn't killed this couple.

"It's not an animal," Will huskily lets out.

Jack appears at his side, eyeing Will carefully because of his reaction (*presumably*).

"It's a man who wants to be an animal," Will continues, much more in-the-present than previously.

Jack's head gives a small jerk of question, then pops back into place with belief. Sighing, he asks, "does he believe he's an animal?"

"It's not what he *believes*, it's what he *imagines*."

“Well, what does he want?”

“He wants to maul. Nothing personal about this. He doesn’t know them—he doesn’t need to know them. They’re just… Meat to him. Prey.”

Jack hums; he and Will had started walking towards the woman’s body. “This kind of psychosis doesn’t just slip through the system,” Jack points out. “Somewhere, someone would have noticed this.”

“If it is psychosis, he got inside of it somehow. Tamed it. Made a suit out of it. He’s an engineer… Or he—he understands engineering. He knows how to build. He built his beast,” Will gestures to the dead bodies around he and Jack. “He is a student of predators.”

-

The next day, in Hannibal’s office, Will decides to breach the topic of the animal-killer. Not to be confused with a killer of animals, of course, but quite literally an animal-*human* killer.

Will had been leaning his lower back against Hannibal’s desk, chatting aimlessly about the killer to put a face to a name. Or, a name to a face.

Fuck—at this rate—anything to *anything. Any clue.*

“No beast is more savage than man when possessed with power answerable to his own rage,” Hannibal poetically states.

Will shakes his head. “It’s not rage,” he licks his bottom lip. Hannibal was to his right, but behind him—messing around with paper’s atop his desk, and, no doubt, eyeing Will while he wasn’t looking. Will could *feel* it. “Rage is an emotional response to being provoked. This is something else.”

“What is it?” Hannibal asks, curious and amazed as per usual in Will’s presence. Unfortunately, Will’s quite used to impressing everyone and everything.

He turns, sitting slightly on the man’s desk and catching his soft maroon eyes. They glint in response to the contact. “Instinct,” Will replies, shrugging. When Hannibal quietly observes him, Will continues and finishes with—“it’s the way he thinks.”

“The way any animal thinks depends on limitations of mind and body,” Hannibal closes a book, causing a soft thud to echo through the room. “If we learn our limitations too soon, we never learn our power.”

“His victims are *torn apart*. I’d say he learned his power,” Will jests.

Hannibal exhales through his nose in a soft laugh, nodding politely. “He claimed his power.” Hannibal rounds the table to stand in front of Will. Will, who doesn’t move. Hannibal, who appreciates it. “Can you imagine tearing someone apart? Or would you prefer to use a gun?”

Will gives a playful, sinister smile. “Guns lack intimacy.”

Hannibal stalks towards Will, turns, and sits on his desk slightly with Will—more so leaning against it than anything. Though, Will didn’t have his entire weight on the desk, neither. “You set an event in motion with a gun; you don’t complete it. You fantasized about killing me with your hands,” his eyes flit to Will’s lips, then drag back up, “wouldn’t that be more satisfying than pulling a trigger?”

Will gives an indifferent shrug. “Yes.”

Hannibal nods and looks ahead of them. “When you sent the man to kill me, were you imaging killing me yourself? Living vicariously through him as if… Your hands tightened the noose around my neck? Or were you simply hiding?”

Will thinks, then after a beat, replies, “I wasn’t hiding from anything the first time I tried to kill you.”

Hannibal gives a tilt of head in disagreement. “You were hiding. Behind the gun.” A comfortable, thoughtful silence falls. It’s not long after, though, that Hannibal perks up again. “You must allow yourself to be intimate with your instincts, Will.”

Will hums, pushing off the desk and standing idly. Hannibal joins him, height rocketing over Will once again. He glances at him. “I told you I didn’t want you egging me into murder, Dr. Lecter.”

Hannibal smiles softly. His hand comes up to idly brush a curl from Will’s eyes. “Never,” Hannibal replies.

“I’m serious.”

“I know. Will, to be yourself, to come into your true potential, you must learn from others. I am merely suggesting a tactic which I know to benefit you.” He steps forward, cradling Will’s face. “Intimacy has always been a craving for you. Even in death, you’ll want to experience it. You’ll want to die meaningfully, by love, perhaps. A way that is personal.” Hannibal gives a soft shrug. “So make this personal.”

-

“Will,” Hannibal called out, watching Will approach his car in the snow.

Will looks back, seeing the man’s silhouette just barely from the steps of his office. He offers a small smile, raise of brow, and asks, “yes?”

“Would you…” he licks his lips. “Like to come home with me, tonight?”

Will's smile broadens, shy and surprised. "Shooting for a streak, Hannibal? You're going to run me dry, you know."

"Hard to resist," Hannibal comments. "So, yes?"

Will shrugs. "Need Alana to watch my dogs."

"We'll call her on the way there."

A nod, and Will finalizes, "don't see why not, then."

-

The soft sheets of Hannibal's huge bed greet him in the morning. His stomach, although stuffed with a delicious dinner from Hannibal the previous night, sat empty and hungry.

Hannibal laid beside him, and Will finds himself reaching out to graze his cheek with his hand. In this lighting—the soft sun painting a light yellow shade on Hannibal's skin—he looked like a glowing angel.

A devil would suit a bit better, but Will was sure Hannibal looked absolutely holy like this. No barriers… No concerns… No death, no life. Just *Hannibal*. Hannibal Lecter—pure, white, and *shiny*.

Over the course of their dinner last night—Will recalls, getting out of bed and padding to Hannibal's bathroom—Hannibal shared some interesting news. Randall Tier, a previous patient of Hannibal's, fit the profile of the animal-killer perfectly.

He was pushed to murder, by Hannibal, of *course*. It didn't take Will long to decipher that at *all*.

Hannibal had conversed with him about where he worked, and offered to give Jack the information secretly as to allow the team to invest. Will, grateful (although he had no idea what the catch here was), told him he'd love that.

He wasn't too concerned with the killer, anymore. He was glad to help save lives by catching Tier in the act—but he'd much rather continue nights and mornings like these. Hannibal's memory had plagued Will's bones down to the very marrow that made his blood. It turned him black from inside out, corrupted with nothing else besides the frequent hum of Hannibal, Hannibal, Hannibal. If he wasn't thinking about Hannibal, he would. If he was, he wouldn't stop.

He was becoming *obsessed*.

Maybe—that was okay.

He brushes his teeth in the large bathroom of Hannibal Lecter's room. There was a spare in the mirror-cabinet (specifically bought for Will) which he used to clean the sleep-goop from his mouth. Large arms wrapped around his waist, and a nose burrowed in the line of his neck.

"Oh, hello," Will greets. His teeth felt clean and he tasted faintly of mint.

Hannibal, somehow not at all disheveled by sleep, gives a broad smile at Will. Will vaguely recalls that he's only in Hannibal's large button up—but that it's open. Self-consciousness encourages him to button it again…

But the domestication of the morning stopped him.

He trusted and let go.

“Sleep well, Will?” Hannibal asks, pressing a soft kiss to the neck of Will and then separating himself to brush his own teeth.

“Yes, you?” Will asks back, politely. He put his toothbrush up and turned to press his back into the sink.

“Positively impeccable, my sleep was,” Hannibal assures, beginning to pristinely brush his teeth.

Will gives a small hum, leaning forward to nip Hannibal’s ear. Hannibal gives an interested hum, similar to Will’s. “We have a bit before we need to go and meet Jack, you know. He may question why we’re together,” a bite on the lobe, “why I’m littered in bite and suck marks.”

Hannibal leans down only to spit elegantly into the sink, and flush it away with the faucet’s stream. When he washes out his mouth and returns the toothbrush to its holder, he glances hungrily down at Will. “Wouldn’t that be lovely? Getting to tell Jack how I ravaged you the night previous?”

Will blushes faintly, but snorts. “I’d never do that.”

Hannibal turns to hold the side of Will’s neck, thumbing aggressively at a hickey. Will flinches, letting out an ‘*ah*’ in pain. “No, but you’d think about it.” He pulls Will flush to his body. Their erections grind hopelessly together, making Will gasp and bear his neck. “And you’d look at me. Eyes full of desire and hunger. Then, I’ll prove to him who gave you those marks by taking you then and there. You know I cannot resist you.”

“You talk too much,” Will complains sarcastically. His words had formed precum to bead at Will’s dick, which was out in the open and rutting against Hannibal’s clothed one. “C’mon, old man, let’s get some exercise in before work.”

“Anything for you, dear Will.”

-

At the museum which Tier worked at, Will and Jack and Hannibal stood together awaiting Tier's arrival.

A young, spirited man rounds a corner and approaches them with a good amount of pep in his step. Will calmly recognizes that they look decently similar. "You wanted to speak to me?" He prompts, smile polite but tight.

Jack, for whatever reason, beams immensely at the boy. "Ah, Randall Tier," he greets, pulling out his badge for authentication, "Special Agent Jack Crawford with the FBI. This is Will Graham."

"Uh…" Tier gapes slightly, looking back at Will. Will was vaguely listening and watching, more so observing the skeletons of animals around him instead.

"Did you… Put all that together?"

"Yes, I did," Tier says, smiling a bit pridefully.

"Nice work," Jack praises with a small smile. He points to a skull nearby. "What is that?"

"That is a cave bear," Tier replies, accentuating every word to be precise.

"You put together a lot of cave bears, do you?"

"Yeah—Yeah, I put them together, take them apart, put them back together again."

"You understand their mechanics and how they're engineered?"

“We understand a lot about cave bears. Their fossils have been found in the tens of thousands, all over southern Europe. Very common.”

“The reason I ask is because a uh… A cave bear skull… was used recently as a murder weapon.” Jack purses his lips.

“Prehistoric jaws and claws are designed to do what they do best,” Tier comments.

“The victims were torn apart,” Will chimes in. He eyes the cave bear’s fossilized skull. “Used the right tool for the job.”

“Well, look inside the skull and you’ll find what the job is,” Tier replies.

“You have a history of trouble with things inside your head. Isn’t that right, Mr. Tier?” Asks Jack.

There’s an uncomfortable silence where Tier stares at Jack. A small look of offense paints his face. “Is that what this is about? You think I killed someone with a fossil?” Jack shrugs. Tier’s voice gets defensive as he continues, “I had an identity disorder. The doctors told me the internal map of my body didn’t match reality. Do you know what it’s like when the skin you’re wearing doesn’t fit?”

Will glances over, amusement hiding under his face. “I can imagine.”

“I know who I am now,” Tier continues. “And I’m doing much better. I’m socializing, I take my medication, I’m employed, and I work. Very hard. And I’m proof that mental illness is treatable.”

-

Will shushes his dogs, annoyed that someone was even coming to his property at this time of night. It could've been Hannibal, granted, but Jesus, could he not appear so late?

Pulling his coat closer, he watches the vehicle park.

Oh my god—Will thinks briefly.

"Hi!" That woman from way—*way* back when was getting out of the car. She looked as mesmerizing as ever, blushing faintly because of the lack of heat outside. "I don't know if you remember me. But, I met you outside of Dr. Lecter's office."

"I remember it," Will says dumbly. He swallows. "How did you find me?" His face creases with worry, anger, and annoyance.

"Well, as it turns out, you are famous," she replies.

"Uh… You're not exactly anonymous yourself," Will pitches. "Margot."

"Did you, uh, sneak a peek inside Dr. Lecter's calendar?"

He smiles more genuinely than intended. "Yeah," he says, "it is exactly what I did."

"It's cold. Do you have any whiskey?"

-

Will invites her inside—only because she drove to Wolftrap to see him. He doesn't know why. Perhaps her getting more tipsy would allow him to discover the truth.

Pouring a light but of cheap whiskey into a glass, he passes it to her.

To start off, “what is the heir to the Verger Meat Packing dynasty doing at my door?”

“Oh, my brother is the heir,” she says. She eyes him seductively—Will pretends not to notice. “Not me. I have the wrong parts and the wrong proclivity for parts.”

Will sits across from her, taking a teensy gulp of whiskey from his own glass. “You—uh—didn’t answer my question.”

“Came for a character reference. Patient to patient. What do you think of Dr. Lecter’s therapy?”

Therapy? All Will could think of in relation to Hannibal nowadays was his—

He shrugs to tether himself back to the present. “It depends what you’re in therapy for.”

“Oh, I’m in therapy for all kinds of reasons. The Verger’s slaughter eighty-six thousand cattle a day, and thirty-six thousand pigs, depending on the season. But that’s just the public carnage.”

“What’s your private carnage?”

“I tried to kill my brother.”

Will’s brows shoot up instinctively, and he gives an amused smile to the blunt claim. Nodding, he replies, “well, I assume he had it coming.”

“Did he ever,” she smiles softly. It compliments her almost *angelically*. “What’s your private carnage?”

Will blinks. Sips his drink. With a tilt of head, he replies, “I tried to murder Dr. Lecter.”

She leans forward, small laugh punctuating her words as she asks: “did *he* have it coming?”

Will tilts his head back to be straight. “What do you think?”

“I can’t say that I know,” she looks to the side.

Will shrugs even if Ms. Verger can’t see it. “Neither can I.”

“We have some very similar issues.” She looks back to Will. “Although I doubt that Dr. Lecter have you the same advice on murder that he gave me.”

“And what’s that?” Will asks, knowing the answer.

“He said… ‘If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again.’”

-

The next morning, Will visited Hannibal’s office. He, of course, allowed Will in happily.

“Can we talk? Not a session, but just talk?”

“Well, sweet Will, you know that I do not have a patient for another hour. Please,” he gestures to one of his chairs.

Will shakes his head. “Prefer to stand.”

Hannibal curiously glances at him, but retracts his arms back to his side politely. “Of course. What troubles you, Will?”

“I’m curious what would happen if your patients started comparing notes, Hannibal,” a pause, “what would Randall Tier have to say to me?”

“What *did* Randall Tier say to you?”

“You were there—even if you hadn’t said anything.”

“Yes, but you hear and see differently than others, my boy. Tell me, Will,” Hannibal eyes him.

Sighing, he says, “he said he was much better now. That mental illness was treatable. Randall Tier is a success story.”

“You believe he’s innocent?” Hannibal asks, following Will as Will aimlessly walks around the office.

“I believe… Your therapy was successful. You can be persuasive.”

Hannibal’s lips quirk into a smile.

“How many have there been? Like Randall Tier?” Will licks his lips unsteadily. “Like *me*?”

The smile twists into a small frown. “Every patient is unique. I have never made any other like you. Never had anyone like you.”

Will’s heart pangs softly, reassured. He inhales, ignoring Hannibal’s assurance. “Your psychiatrist came to visit me at the hospital before my trial.”

Hannibal freezes, voice softening with surprise and danger. Debating on if he needs to murder her—no doubt. “Dr. Du Maurier?”

“She told me she believed me,” Will says. “She knew there were others like me.”

“*Fascinating*,” Hannibal replies sarcastically. “However, I just interject, that I only pushed your darkness out of curiosity at first. Once seeing whom you are, you exceeded anyone else I’ve ever—“

“Did you kill her?”

Hannibal blinks. “No.”

Will nods and falls silent. He wonders if Hannibal will start trying to explain to Will that Will is ‘*different*,’ but he doesn’t. So, after a minute, Will asks, “what do you think about when you think about killing?”

“I think about God.”

Will’s expression reads surprise. “Good and evil?” He teases—because the idea of Hannibal even believing in a God was surreal.

“Good and evil has nothing to do with God. I collect church collapses. Did you see the recent one in Sicily?” A silence falls; Will doesn’t answer. “The facade fell on sixty-give grandmothers during a special mass. Was that evil? Was that God? If he’s up there, he just loves it. Typhoid and swans. It all comes from the same place.”

Will inhales. Exhales. “Does Randall Tier believe in God?”

Hannibal frowns. “Perhaps you should have a more personal conversation with Mr. Tier and ask him what he believes.”

Will stops walking. Hannibal does so, too. “You want to set it up for me?” There was a fearful glint in Will’s eye—no doubt.

“Yes, I will phone him when the time is right. Get everything situated. Tonight?”

Will swallows dryly. His palms felt clammy. “Tonight.”

Yes, tonight, Will Graham was going to kill Randall Tier.

-

His dogs frantically barked at the door. Will had approximately five hours to prepare for his first kill. The decision was his, one hundred percent.

He was *changing*.

And oh, God, Will was going to take a life tonight—

Jesus— someone — whoever *is up there—save him.*

He pops open his front door, a dog bolting out from between his legs. He gasps—“hey!” He debates chasing after Buster, but ultimately decided not to. He pats his leg. “Buster!” Will yells out into the snow and trees. “Buster!”

Alas, little Buster runs and runs into the deep depths of the forests.

Here we go, Will thinks.

He rushes inside, grasping his gun. Messily and clumsily grabbing a coat, he shuffles into it and takes off into the snow. It’s pillowy at his feet, soft and cold.

He follows a lead of passage through the snow made by Buster. “Buster! Buster!” Will exclaims occasionally, rapidly whipping his head around to locate him. Buster was laying in the snow, whimpering and bleeding. His wounds were minor, but Will quickly scooped him up. “Shh, shh,” Will soothes the twitching pup. Buster growls, and Will’s head quickly whips up to catch any movement. There’s nothing besides blankets and blankets of snow, and the scattering of slim, black trees. A branch snaps and it’s all it takes for Will to take off into the night. He sprints full speed to the warmth of his home, almost tripping more than he’s willing to admit.

And he gets there safely, thank God. He pops the door open and practically throws Buster inside. He knows Tier is close to him, so he shuts off all of the lights and backs into the depths of his house. Darkness encompasses him.

My dogs—he thinks.

He hurt my fucking dog.

Will’s eyes glowed blue in the pitch black of his home. He listened to his breathing, the way it was rapid and ever-changing.

The window to his left shatters. A Ravenstag comes crashing through.

-

Will broke into Hannibal's house. He knew it was unorthodox, and he should've just asked—but he didn't want to.

He wanted to surprise and *please*.

The front two doors open, a pristine figure taking the middle. He glances down at his table, where Randall Tier's dead body lay—scratched and bloody all over.

Hannibal purses his lips, turns, closes the doors to his home.

"I'd say this makes us even. I sent someone to kill you… You, technically, sent someone to kill me." Will smiles. Hannibal smiles back, folding his arms in front of him and positively beaming at Will. "Even Steven."

Chapter End Notes

this chapter wasn't super exciting, but i do have to note how happy it makes me to edge you guys with a full scene-description of them GETTIN IT ON. promise the next chapter will give the Deats. trust!

Naka-Choko

Chapter Summary

> Will deals with his anxieties about his first kill with Hannibal, and finds himself taking yet another life. The least of his concerns is whether or not he will be caught or if he is starting to enjoy killing—but whether or not he may love Hannibal.

Chapter Notes

> this chapters kind of short bcz will is in this episode very little and i was too lazy to freestyle ngl. will make the next longer as an apology trust. enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Click. The light switch pops downwards as Will Graham's finger encourages it to. In time with it, the whole of his house darkens to black. Sense of sight gone, all Will can sense is his breath. His ears pick up the heavy pant he's emitting. His chest rises and falls frantically.

He's had this dream, over and over again. Similarly to his haunting of he and Hannibal's first time, his first kill had the same affect. He could recount every movement of his own. Every movement of Tier.

Staring ahead of himself, his heart pounds heavily in his chest. Fear, but majorly adrenaline, forces it to beat twice as fast. His shotgun is clutched in one fist, though it won't be of use this night.

Hannibal had informed him that killing with his hands would be the most satisfactory as Will craves intimacy.

And who would he be to deny his basic needs?

Buster and Winston and many others flit their heads sideways. Pooled around Will's feet, they bark and bark of warning. Will turns his head to the window, where a Ravenstag bursts through. Glitters of glass sparkle as they twinkle in the darkness of Will's house. Will, on idly, reminds himself to steer clear of window for his safety.

He turns slowly, everything in slow motion. The Ravenstag hops over Will as he collapses onto his ass. Will shuffles to his feet, maneuvering his gun more effectively into both hands and preparing to shoot.

But the Ravenstag had changed. Now stood a man who was only the dark depths of black. He still had the Stag's deep black eyes, which glittered and mirrored Will back into himself. Everything could be seen with those eyes. Branching every which way from his head—black antlers. He was the epitome of night. The embodiment of nothing.

The Wendigo stares at Will as he figures the gun towards his head, ready to shoot if need be. His dogs bark in the background, going unheard by both creatures.

Will dramatically throws the gun aside. It clacks against the hardwood floor resoundingly.

It's not long after that the Wendigo gets the upper hand. Will feels his back collide with one of his house's many walls. It aches beneath the power of both the Wendigo's force and hardness of the wall. His antlers stab into either side of Will, pinning him to the spot. Wasting not time, Will grabs the antlers. They pierce his skin slightly, but he pushes up and forward. He pushes and pushes with all the strength of a man under adrenaline and fear. The effort causes him to shake. But by planting his feet, hauling himself forward and only stopping to let go of the Wendigo—he collapses to the ground. Will swings his legs around either side of the thing's torso.

For my dogs.

A punch to the Wendigo's face.

For my sanity.

A punch to Hannibal's face.

For my becoming.

Punch.

Killing.

Punch.

Revival.

Punch.

Will grabs the antlers of the returned Wendigo. He pulls backwards, arching with the effort.

For fucking *everything.*

A distant rip is echoed through Will house. In his hands, though, a piece of skull.

Randall Tier was beneath him. Half his face was covered by fossil, the other was open and in shambles. Blood and scratch marks painted his face.

Will finds him quite beautiful in death.

-

That night, after Will delivered Randall Tier's body to Hannibal as a gift, he cleaned his wound. Will faintly remembers the surge of hot water against his torn knuckles—the burn and agony of it. Hannibal kept a firm hand atop Will's as he squirmed and writhed to get away.

"Okay—*Okay*, please, that *hurts*—" Will remembers begging.

"You must keep it, it will stifle with time. Come on, Will, I know you can do this." Hannibal had said.

And surely enough, with a good amount of time, Will did settle. The warmth started to comfort the depths of his freed skin, and the blood was fresh and new as it poured out from the wounds. That was when Hannibal took a soft cloth to it. He smudged Will's knuckles with a tenderness incomprehensible by man, removing the blood and gunk that was molded to Will's open knuckles. After a fair amount of time, the water darkened to a deep red.

"Don't go inside, Will," Hannibal had dissuaded. He'd noticed Will's pensive face and no doubt wanted to ensure a sane version of himself after his murder.

As though *anyone* could be sane after killing someone.

"You'll want to retreat," Hannibal had reassured. "You'll want it as the glint of the rail tempts us when we hear the approaching train. Stay with me."

Will solemnly looked up at Hannibal, in that moment. "Where else would I go?"

"You have everywhere to go." Hannibal begun wrapping Will's knuckles in bandages. "You should be quite pleased. *I* am."

“Of course you are,” Will joked, but he hadn’t felt real amusement in the moment. He was very, *very* tired.

“When you killed Randall, did you fantasize you were killing me?”

Will swallowed.

Hannibal looked away, separating his lips with an audible click. “Most of what we do… Most of what we believe, is motivated by death.”

“I’ve never felt as alive as I did when I was killing him.” Will had whispered.

“Then you owe Randall Tier a debt.” Will tilted his head at this, confused. “How will you repay him?”

Will had swallowed again, turning away from Hannibal to think. “Uh… Well, I guess by giving him what he’s always wanted.”

Hannibal hummed. “And how will you do that?”

“I’ll need your hands.”

Glancing at Will with intrigue, Hannibal replied, “then my hands you have.”

-

“Will?”

“Yeah? Yes? Hey, sorry, Jack. Just kind of woke up. A new case?”

“No, I’m afraid. Someone killed Randall Tier and…”

Will waits with interest to hear Jack explain his design. He audibly swallows, hoping the phone hadn’t caught it.

“Well, I don’t know. Best you just come look.”

There was an air of suspicion to Jack’s voice that Will didn’t necessarily like.

He couldn’t suspect Will. Why would Will have any reason to do this?

Why *did* Will do this?

Just because?

Will gives a physical shake of his head, clearing his thoughts.

“Alright, send me the address.”

-

Randall Tier’s face was severed from the neck and hollowed out. Hannibal did most of the work for Will—who, otherwise, would have next to no idea on what he was doing. The head was put on top of a Sabertooth Tiger’s head, cut at the upper lip and down so that the teeth seemed to protrude like a mouth from his face. Spears for fangs, Randall was reborn.

For a soft touch, he and Hannibal did the same with Randall's arms and lower body. They molded it onto the corresponding parts, bloody but perfect. Fingers were cut so the Tiger's nails extended outward like they were Randall's paws.

Will examined his own work, now, like he hadn't created it. Like Hannibal hadn't tenderly kissed him while he literally scooped the brains out from Tier's body and praised him.

That was when Jack, encircling Will's creation with undeniable admiration, spoke up, "the killer chose not to dispose of the body, but to display it."

Hannibal, beside a stationary Will, perked. "A jarring reminder of the informality of death."

Over their increasingly shared time together, Will was able to recognize many micro expressions of Hannibal's. At this point in time, Hannibal was positively beaming. He was so, so very proud, and the notation made Will want to blush and smile and even… *Maybe giggle.*

Jesus.

"Randall Tier was denied the respectful end that he himself denied others."

Hannibal hums, nodding in agreement. "This is a humiliation, a final indignity."

"He isn't mocking him," Will clarifies—tone a bit defensive. He clears his throat quietly. "This isn't disdain. He's… Commemorating him."

Hannibal's brow quirks, giving a small, knowing smile to Will. "This killer has no fear for the consequences of what he's done."

"No guilt."

No, definitely no guilt. Hannibal had advised Will to ensure that he worked for no regrets—ever. And, well, Will would be glad to life an un-regretful life.

Jack suspiciously eyes Hannibal and Will—but Will is no longer paying attention. He approaches an ever staring Tiger—Randall Tier—and closes his eyes. The bright yellow pendulum swings beneath his lids, taking him back through time.

But Will doesn't need to imagine how this was done.

"Hello again," he says to Randall.

"Come closer," Tier suggests, blinking at Will. "I want to see you."

So, Will does. He steps towards the white fossil—dripped in Tier's blood and holding Tier's face.

The profiler circles his creation, admiring it for what feels like the thousandth time. He was so proud to put a faithful end to Randall and elevate him to art.

Like Hannibal.

"Can you see you?" Tier asks.

Will shrugs slowly. "Clearer and clearer." He completes his circle, staring into Tier's eyes. "You forced me to kill you."

"I didn't force you to enjoy it. You made me a monument." When Will glances up, there's a humanoid version of his creation. He's human besides his face, lower jaw that of a Sabertooth Tiger's.

“You’re welcome,” Will says, lips quirking lightly in amusement.

“The monument is not to me; it’s to you.”

Will shrugs again. “I gave you what you want. This is who you are. What you feel finally matches the reality of what I see.”

A hand falls to Will’s shoulder, grip firm and strong—but comforting.

“This is my becoming,” Randall says. “And… It’s yours.”

“This is my design,” Will exclaims proudly, closing his eyes to be encapsulated by dark.

Light fills his eyes again. Jack is by his right, now, Hannibal still happily stood to his left.

“He knew his killer,” Will starts. “There’s a… Familiarity here. Someone who met him. Understood him. Someone like him. Different pathology, same instinct.”

“His killer empathized with him?” Jack asks.

Before this, Will may be certain he’s felt true hardship.

Now, he’s disagreeing. Because trying to explain yourself to the FBI without them recognizing you’re pointing a large dagger to your own throat was hard. Describing a killer who saw Randall how Hannibal had seen Will. Describing Will Graham—as, well, Will Graham himself.

He swallows. “Don’t mistake understanding for empathy, Jack. No, if there’s anything, it’s… It’s envy.”

“Envy?” Jack asks, voice demanding and confused.

“Randall Tiger came into his own much easier than whoever killed him.”

Hannibal’s hand finds the small of Will’s back. Will flinches only minutely—it’s the first time that Hannibal’s ever been physical outside of private rooms—but ultimately relaxes into the touch. It’s guiding and soothing. Yet, everything to do with Hannibal was, really.

“This was a fledgling killer. He’s never killed before—not like this,” Hannibal continues for Will, squeezing his lower back.

Will looks back towards Hannibal, but tries not to draw attention to the contact. It was more for Will than anyone else. Less of a claim and more of a comfort.

“Not like this, no. This is the nightmare that followed him out of his dreams.”

-

“You’re not eating?” Hannibal questions, looking down at Will’s barely touched plate.

“I’m very nervous,” replies Will, licking his lower lip and eyeing the unattractive food. His appetite fiddles even more into nothingness. “Maybe I should just go to bed,” he suggests, rubbing his eyes with the heels of his hands.

“I can see how much emotion is plaguing you, Will. It’s riddling you so much it makes my heart feel sore, itself.”

Will smiles softly, sarcastic. “I’m sorry my worries are so inconvenient to you. Not all of us are professionals.”

“No, of course not. Let me help rid you of your troubles.”

Although the idea of a good fuck *sounded* great to Will at the moment, he gives a soft shake of his head and stands. Hannibal watches intently. “I don’t know, I’m not really in the mood for that. I just… I think I just need to sleep.”

Hannibal, swallowing the bite of fish he’d just consumed, takes out the cloth from his plate and pats his lips. He places it atop the half-ate dish, gets up, and collects Will’s plate with a kiss to a forehead.

That was all the dismissal that Will needed, padding up the stairs of Hannibal’s mansion to his bedroom. It was neat and tidy as always, covered in red. He shuffles into the warm, soft blankets and sheets, exhaling with pleasure. It is next to two seconds later that Hannibal joins him.

“Goodnight, Will. May sleep rest your thoughts.”

Will smiles, leaning forward to tenderly kiss Hannibal’s upper lip. It was rare that Will ever showed soft affection. That was majorly a Hannibal thing—small kisses to Will’s face whenever he was near.

Will was more of a crash-of-lips-and-tongue-and-teeth during love making kind of guy.

But, much of him was changing, after all.

“‘Night, Hannibal.”

-

The morning, Hannibal drives Will to see Freddie Lounds. She looked as she always did. Fox-faced and ready to snip. She sidesteps, red curls following the movement, to allow Will to step inside.

He does. Her apartment is shabby—but Will recognizes that he's just gotten used to the luxury of Hannibal's huge mansion. Where everything was expensive and personal and, sometimes, from another country.

Will had given permission to Freddie to share his story while he was in prison. Why he did this, he can't even remember, but their meetings were rare enough that Will didn't care too much. He said what he had to say, and then he left. Not much more to it.

"I've upped the ante in my publishing deal," Freddie begins. "There's been movie interest. Hollywood is a fine place for the obnoxious and wealthy."

Will clicks his tongue—a habit he picked up from Hannibal. "You're not wealthy, Freddie."

"Oh, I will be," she says cockily. Her head tilts, smirk proud along her lips. "No, I am a pariah among journalists because I took a different faith. But I am putting that faith in you." Excitedly, Freddie leans forward and clicks an audio tape recorder. Will was used to that, by now. "Let's talk about the Chesapeake Ripper. Frederick Chilton, who knew?"

"Who knew."

"No one did. No one would, not even you. You were so certain the Chesapeake Ripper was Hannibal Lecter—you tried to kill him."

"You neglected 'allegedly'."

"No I didn't."

Will clenches his jaw shut. *He could not deal with Freddie.*

“Hannibal Lecter is your psychiatrist again. What’s up with that?”

“I was wrong about him!” Will exclaims next to *merrily*. His voice picks up in pitch to betray amusement—but there is none. “That’s what’s up with that.”

“Maybe you were,” Freddie replies thoughtfully. “Maybe you weren’t.”

Will tenses. Swallowing, he grits out, “Dr. Chilton was the Chesapeake Ripper.”

“The Chesapeake Ripper had surgical skills Dr. Chilton did not.”

“They had the same profile.”

“Dr. Chilton was a woeful surgeon—dangerous, even. I’ve been chatting with some of his old medical school chums. They say he fled to psychiatry to avoid embarrassment.”

Will sits across from Freddie. “My story with the Chesapeake Ripper already has an ending, Freddie.”

“Mine doesn’t.” She leans forward, elbows resting on knees and hands collected ahead of both. “Do you really think Dr. Chilton killed Abigail Hobbs? I don’t. Even if I let this story go, I will never let that go.”

Will’s heart pangs with a familiar depression.

Oh, *Abigail*.

What I wouldn't do—he thinks—*to bring you to life again.*

Swallowing, because tears were threatening his eyes, he replies. "*Trust* me, Freddie… Neither will I."

-

"Ms. Lounds broke down your mood a bit, did she?"

Will flinches slightly—so lost in thought that he'd forgotten he was being driven to Hannibal's house. He sighs and gives a soft, almost missable nod.

"Very regular for her. For what did she say this time, that has got you down?"

"Told me she believed me, discreetly." Cautiously, Will eyes a stilled Hannibal. "I steered her away and told her I believed the Chesapeake Ripper to be Chilton. She doesn't believe me. Doesn't think I don't believe it to be you anymore—and she's right, so it was hard to lie to her as always is when I lie to anyone."

Hannibal hums. "You feeling protective of me is unusual."

"And it's still not happened yet," Will defends. "I know you're not dumb enough to get caught, and I don't feel the need to protect you for that reason. Who you *are*, sure, but you'll fight and win against anyone, so. It was…" a swipe to his bottom lip by his tongue. "Her mention of Abigail."

Hannibal looks over at Will, and there's question running over his eyes. Half-wondering if Will should ask what he was debating, Hannibal speaks up before he can—"I'm sorry."

Will shrugs. “‘S fine.”

“Can I make it up to you, sweet Will?”

The car parked—they were at Hannibal’s house. Checking the dashboard clock, Will saw it was close to five in the afternoon.

Will gives a knowing look. “Wine and dine me?”

Smiling, Hannibal replies, “of course.”

Just make me forget—Will thinks.

-

Fire gracefully rose from the wick inside a candle that Hannibal had just lit. He had many around his bedroom, which he always made a show of putting to life before making love to Will. It was pretty silly—Will didn’t give a shit about the romantic side of their sex, usually—but sweet.

“Full and satisfied?” Hannibal questions, now approaching Will with hands on his hips.

“Almost,” Will breathes, leaning up to connect their lips.

They’d kissed—and done so much more—so many times. Will couldn’t keep up with how many things he and Hannibal had done together. And yet, standing here, fully dressed and all, Will Graham was nervous. Each kiss made a boom of a firework inside of him. Butterflies flapped their wings in his stomach. His hands shook as though it took effort to rise them and clasp Hannibal’s blazer.

Hannibal disconnected their lips, and Will beats him to seductively kissing down Hannibal's body. Hannibal had done so so many times, and Will wanted to let go. Wanted to please.

He sloppily kissed Hannibal's jaw, who was opening his own button-up on Will's body. He doesn't take it off, though, instead traveling large hands over Will's faded abs and tough pecs. Humming approvingly, Will had arrived at Hannibal's neck.

He bit. Full-force, jaw spreading wide, Will sank his teeth into Hannibal's flesh. The man above him gasped, majorly from surprise, and thrust forward into Will's body.

"Will," Hannibal breathes out, head falling back to bare it to Will. Will happily releases Hannibal from his jaw, licking away the blood which was pooling into small drops. It was metallic and distasteful, but Will licks and licks anyway.

"I want to change my answer about something," Will whispers against Hannibal's neck. His warm breath kisses his own face, bouncing off of Hannibal.

"Yes?" Hannibal inquires, breathy and *so* sexy to Will's ears.

Will doesn't answer. For a while, he works off Hannibal's clothes. He takes off the blazer (making a show to throw it to the floor and displease Hannibal), the tie (laying it on the bed for Hannibal to use *later*), the button up (letting it flow from Hannibal's shoulders and onto the wood behind him), and places two firm hands to Hannibal's waist. He kisses wetly against Hannibal's skin. His shoulders, his arms, his pecs, his stomach—all until he had to position himself on his knees to get lower. Playfully, he kisses where he knows his dick to be through his slacks.

"I wouldn't kill you with my hands," Will starts darkly. He unbuckles Hannibal's belt, gives it a good glance, and throws it to the bed beside him in case Hannibal was feeling *scandalous*. "I wouldn't kill you with a gun." Gingerly unbuttoning slacks, unzipping Hannibal's fly, lowering the pants just enough to see the (*large*) outline of Hannibal's cock through his boxers. He swallows, looking up at Hannibal through his dark lashes. His eyes had to have been a deep blue, as well, clouded by lust and adrenaline. Hannibal was looking at him so intensely that Will was sure he would die if he took his eyes away from him. Will

continues to stare holes into Hannibal's red eyes as he tugs down boxers—a shaft narrowly missing his face as it springs out. Hannibal's hand moves to pet Will's hair. Both of Will's hands come up to start stroking Hannibal gently, blinking more lovingly. Hannibal's expression softens immediately, reciprocating the love and attraction easily. That's when Will finishes… "I'd do it with my teeth. I'd tear out your throat—slowly—and I'd find your recipes to eat you after."

-

Will gives head to Hannibal with every ounce of strength he owns. Not as though he had too much of a choice—at this point, Hannibal had been roughly fucking into Will's mouth like he'd rather kill himself than be separated from it. However, Will didn't mind too much. He let his hands fall to Hannibal's knees, scratching and pinching to leave marks, and slackened his jaw to be used. Just as much as he enjoyed taking his pleasure from Hannibal without concern for how the other felt—Hannibal did, too. He used Will like a mere toy.

And, *well*, Will was okay with being nothing more than a mouth for a bit.

What feels like hours later, Hannibal pulls himself from Will's mouth with a wet pop. He leans down to grab under Will's armpits and *throws him*. A yelp barely escapes Will before Hannibal is on top of him on his bed, smashing their lips together and stripping Will of his pants. His button-up, still on, seemed to not be of concern, since Hannibal made no move to take it off.

Hannibal breaks off their kiss to make eye contact with Will and conduct a familiar motion with his pointer finger. Eagerly (*Doggystyle was Will's favorite!*), Will flips onto his stomach and backs up to arch himself again Hannibal.

Who—

"*Oh*, *fuck*!" Will screams as he's impaled by Hannibal's cock. Pain shoots through every inch of his innards, and his brain yells at him to run. He has no chance to think of an escape or beg Hannibal to get out and prep him first—the man was snapping his hips in and out of Will anyway. "*Oh*, *God*," Will later finds himself moaning out, hands grasping the sheets below him. "*Hannibal*—"

Shuffling cuts him off. He turns his head to see Hannibal utilizing his tie. He slides Will's arms beneath himself, maneuvering his sleeves up to expose bare wrists, and ties a clever knot with his tie around them. Will distantly wonders if he can lean his hips down to thrust into his useless hands, but he knows Hannibal will never let him do that. One hand slivers to cover his mouth, the other of Hannibal's burrowing in his hair to shove Will's face down and into both the sheets below him and Hannibal's large hand over his lips. He nips as much as possible, but Hannibal keeps him there, leaning over Will's body and grunting as he frantically fucks into him.

"This is what you were made for, Will," Hannibal growls, effectively shoving Will into a complete lack of thought.

He forgot all else. Nothing existed besides this moment. Not Abigail, not Randall Tier, not the FBI—no one and nothing.

"You look so beautiful like this and you—" Hannibal hisses— "*take it so well*. Made for me."

One of Hannibal's hands—the one over Will's mouth—slides from its place to form a tight fist around Will's weeping cock. That was all it took for Will to cum while screaming Hannibal's name.

-

An empty house and beautifully comfortable sheets are what Will wakes up to, the next morning. Hannibal had told him he'd have a session with Ms. Verger early, and would likely not be there for Will's wake—Will often slept in until midday if he could.

He'd also told Will about a dinner. Will had figured it'd be another one of their dates, taking place at Hannibal's house where the food they ate was *not* vegan, but it was supposedly a dinner he was having with Alana. Hannibal invited Will to join their dinner ("*I don't have too much desire to be without you, Will")*. As Will usually had nothing to do, he accepted.

-

Evening, tomorrow, came quickly. Will had time to go and ensure his dogs would be okay, seeing as he so often resided in Hannibal's house nowadays, which he was immensely grateful for.

Alana sat across from Will's usual seat, and he gave a small, pleasant smile to her. "Sorry, Winston had an accident and kept me up."

"Oh, no problem, Will," Alana reassures, waving her hand. "I believe Hannibal is finishing dinner up."

Surely enough, the man of the hour came out with a huge pig on a trolly.

And a similarly large, *visible* bite on his neck.

Great.

"Brined and roasted… Whole suckling pig. A gift from a friend," says Hannibal. He had begun to fix Will's plate.

"A friend of yours, not a friend of the pig's," Will jests, eliciting an amused smile from Alana.

"There are those who raise livestock—" he moved to Alana, "—and have a genuine affection for them. The farmer who hand reads lambs loves them and sends them to slaughter."

"They love and kill what they love," says Alana.

“And eat what they love. It’s a paradox.” Hannibal maneuvers to his own plate after replying.

Will swallows.

“Freddie Lounds thinks the two of you are a paradox,” Alana starts questionably. “She sees something no one else sees.”

“What’s that?” Will asks, pretending not to notice the huge branding that he gave Hannibal.

Hannibal sits at the head of the table as Alana replies, “that neither of you is the killer she’s writing about. But together, you might be.”

“Freddie Lounds must consider you a bland interview subject if she’s already restored to fiction,” Hannibal replies, obnoxiously smiling at Will. Will finds it easy to reciprocate, giving a small laugh and knowing smirk.

“She won’t be fenced in by something as malleable as the truth. Freddie has no boundaries.”

“Someone with no boundaries is a psychopath,” Will replies with a shrug, taking a bite of the dinner. He sighs and glances at Hannibal, whom was already watching him. “Delicious,” he praises, smiling gently. He picks up where he left off, joking: “Or a journalist.”

“Freddie isn’t the only one without boundaries.” When Hannibal looks at Alana curiously, she shrugs, continuing. “Your relationship doesn’t seem to know many. Patient and therapist; friend and enemy.”

“Crossing boundaries is different than violating them,” Hannibal suggests.

Will watches as Alana looks at Hannibal with disbelief, then says, “boundaries will always be subject to negotiation.” She looks up at Will, then, who looks away. “It’s just hard to know where you are with each other.“

Will thinks about two nights ago, then pushes it away when he a warmth spreads through his body. He smiles at Hannibal. “We know where we are with each other. Shouldn’t that be enough?” He looks to Alana, and Hannibal follows the glance—the two of them suspiciously smiling at Alana.

-

“So,” Will perks, helping Hannibal with dishes. Alana was long gone, and Will decided to be as honest as possible with Hannibal. “I should tell you something.”

Looking down at Will, Hannibal smiles. “Yes?”

“When I got out of prison, Jack and I made a plan to get you thrown away into my old cell.”

Hannibal’s lips purse. He seems to think, then nods. “I expected such. That was a fair move, after I did what I did to you. Jack suspects me as the ripper, then?”

“Yes.” Will sighs. “And I can’t steer him away from you.”

Hannibal gets lost in thought again.

“But…” Hannibal looks over at Will. “I can make sure, that when the time is right, you and I take him down and can get away.”

Tilting his head, Hannibal’s smile returns. “How so?”

“I’m supposed to fake-kill Freddie Lounds tomorrow.”

“Oh?”

“Yeah. So you’d think I was becoming a murderer and I could web you further into trusting me with information.” Will shrugs.

“Very smart. Your idea?”

Smiling, Will replies, “of course it was. We’d find ways for the FBI to hide Freddie until you… Well, die. But, I’m thinking I may revise the plan. Keep Freddie with me, so no one besides me knows where she is.”

“Kidnap her?” Hannibal perks, interested.

“Oh, no.” Will dries his hands, kisses Hannibal’s cheek, and pulls away to grab his keys and head home. “I’m going to kill her and cover up her death.”

-

Crunch, crunch, crunch, goes the snow as Freddie walks through it. Will was already by his door—but he wasn’t going to let her know he was there.

After a decent sleep in his own bed, Will decided to make the most of his morning. He turns to go and start making his breakfast while his dogs bark obnoxiously. Freddie knocks, tries to open his door, then walks away and toward his shed—just like they planned.

By now, she was no doubt picking the lock and entering it. It’d be dark, and she’d be afraid. She’d be approaching the depths of Will’s shed, and after a minute, find Randall Tier’s murder weapon. She’d snap a handful of pictures. Then, she’d find a cooler—

That was Will’s cue. He put up his dishes, slung on his coat, and started crunching through the snow himself. His shed wasn’t too far from his house, and before he knew it, he was

pulling open the shed and entering it stealthily.

For the most part, Will was going to follow the plan. To kill her immediately would be silly, because Jack was already growing suspicious of Will's siding. So, he'd follow the plan, then inform Jack that he changed up her placement last second ("*Hannibal never comes over. No one does. She'll be fine there*").

Will circles around quietly, and finds his placement across from a searching Freddie. She found a lower jaw, flinching, gasping, and closing the cooler. She meets Will's eyes. When she does, she starts frantically running her hands over her torso to find her gun.

Will starts tracking towards her.

"There really is a very good explanation for all this."

"I don't want to hear it," Freddie responds fearfully.

"Not just a little bit curious?" Will asks back at her, amused and circling his prey.

"Get away from the door," she says.

"I can't let you go, Freddie," Will says, tone mockingly sympathetic. "Not till you've heard what I have to say. I know you're scared. You only have to be scared a moment longer." Will extends his hand. "Give me the gun."

Boom! Freddie shoots above Will—who dramatically flings himself over a table and lays beside it. She starts running away, so Will shuffles to his feet and chases her. He catches her from behind, smashing her into a pole and forcing the gun (which kept shooting) from her hand.

Pepper spray feels his eyes. “Ah!” He exclaims, and she gets away. Will shakily exhales as he tries to blink the blinding liquid from his eyes, groaning and whining. He had to focus—get this shit out and chase her—and *fuck*, it hurt. But eventually, he did. He could see just enough to clumsily follow her.

Freddie had arrived at her car. She’s gets into the front seat, starts phoning Jack, and Will gets there expertly on time. He crowbars her car window, shattering all over her as she screams. His arms wrap around her torso, pulling her up and out of the window.

He drags and drags and *drags*, until finally, they were at Will’s porch. She randomly stops, and Will lets her go.

She shuffles to her feet, turning to say something snarky to Will.

Will didn’t have the patience for that. And Ms. Lounds deserved no intimacy. So, he cocked the gun in his hand (*she looks down, face contorting into that of horror*) and shoots her chest.

Phase One of Will’s plan to kill Freddie Lounds was completed. Will also notes—not as worried as he should be—that this kill was so much easier.

There was no guilt. There was no fear.

Everything was under control—

And Freddie Lounds was dead.

Since Will wasn’t a huge fan of watching the life leave his victims, he turns to initiate Phase Two: Hiding Freddie and going to see Jack. Realistically, Will had about two hours before he’d be phoned about Freddie’s voicemail to Jack’s phone.

That was plenty of time. If Will was correct, Hannibal would be on his way to pick up Freddie's body. He'd leave, store her, and they'd most likely enjoy a feast later tonight on her body.

Will shivers—the *cannibalism* part of his '*becoming*' was definitely the hardest to get his head around. It wasn't that he desired eating his victims, because he definitely did not. Really, Will believes he just knows it will please Hannibal to so. The food was good, so what did it matter that it was human? Will kills to let some pressure off his chest, and Hannibal takes the body to feed Will back the effort it took to execute.

After Will had gotten back from Hannibal's house the previous night, Will had dug a deep hole to hide the murder weapon. Seeing as he used a gun, he stalked toward it and tossed the useless item into the dark, wet snow. Then, he kicked the pile of snow and dirt besides him (from *digging* up the hole) back into its original location. It looked perfect; like nothing had happened. Just as Will planned.

And, oh—there was Hannibal. Wheels came to a stop, and Will turns to see the man getting out of his car. He beams at Will, stopping in front of him now, and glancing over at Lounds' body. "Job well done, Will. I shall get her off of your hands."

"Ah—wait," Will says suddenly. He walks over to her, patting her for her keys, and finds the large bump in her left jean pocket. Tugs them out, admiring their pretty clicks together as metal meets metals. "Alright, all good," he affirms, now back stepping to Hannibal again.

Hannibal turns Will's head with a large hand to his cheek. "Tonight will be splendid," he tells Will, kissing his cheek and shuffling towards Freddie to start picking her up.

"Mouthy red pig tonight, then?" Will asks, smiling excitedly.

"Yes," Hannibal confirms, Freddie thrown over his shoulder, "and a good love making to my *perfect* boy." Will flushes, even as Hannibal walks back over to him and kisses his nose. "See you, Will."

"Hannibal."

Red curls bounce with every large step of Hannibal's, all the way to his car. The man leans down slightly, pops open his back seat (seriously? He couldn't have used his *seriously*?) and leans even further so Freddie slides off of his shoulder and onto his soft seats. When he's secured her there, he turns, waving enthusiastically at Will and climbing into the driver's seat. Will only starts moving Freddie's car to further back on the road when the Bentley has disappeared from his property.

-

Will glances at Jack, tilting his head. He knows he's acting so much like Hannibal—but sometimes, being Hannibal's closed-off personality was easier than being himself. He lied better this way.

Jack clicks off his phone, which had been playing a voice mail from Freddie Lounds of her screaming. The stern look he gives Will is more suspicious than anything. He doesn't want to believe Will actually killed Freddie—is definitely convincing himself that it didn't happen. Still, he plays out their plan made months ago.

"Freddie Lounds left me that message three hours ago. Her cell signal is dead now. Last call was traced to the nearest phone tower in," Jack sighs and sits straighter, "uh, Wolf Trap Virginia. We have her on security cameras at a gas station filling up her car, six miles from your farm."

Alana, sitting beside him, eyes him just as suspiciously. This is mainly because she *wasn't* let in on the plan.

So, she, without a doubt, knows Will killed Freddie.

"Freddie was supposed to interview me," Will lies easily—rehearsed and indifferent. "She never showed up."

Jack's brows furrow. "Why're you granting interviews to Freddie Lounds?"

Will sighs, and the emotion in it is real. Why, indeed. “I owed her one.”

Hannibal and he make eye contact, then. He was sat beside Alana, quiet up until now.

Why Jack made a huge group meeting, Will didn’t know. *That* wasn’t a part of the previous plan. But, it was fine.

“Surely, Freddie Lounds has more enemies than Will.”

“Not in Wolf Trap, Virginia.” Jack’s anger was visible beneath the surface. Whether he knew Will to be a killer or not, he trusted Hannibal to be. And to Jack’s eyes, Hannibal was here, lying for Will. He was finally seeing. And God—the karma was real.

“I live in the middle of nowhere, Jack; if someone wanted to take her, it’s… Not a bad place to do it.”

-

Hannibal practically danced around the kitchen that night. No, practically was the wrong word—he took Will’s hand’s multiple times and spun them around his kitchen. It was the singular time that Hannibal had invited Will to cook with him, and Will could recognize that the killer was falling in love.

That made Will wonder… *Did he love Hannibal?*

Love seemed so feeble compared to what he felt for the man, really.

“I provided the ingredients,” Will perks randomly, English accent on his tongue to sound more professional. Hannibal, who was slow-dancing them around while the meat cooked,

beamed down at him. “You told me what we should do with them. Quite the dynamic.”

Hannibal acts confused, then says, “what’s the meat?,” like he and Will were starting the cooking and not next to ending it.

Will gives a playful smirk. “What do you think?”

“Veal? Pork perhaps?”

“She was a slim and delicate pig.”

“I’ll make you lomo saltado. No, we’ll make it together.” Hannibal smirks. “You slice the ginger.”

Will giggles—and the sound is so normal to him at this point that he doesn’t flinch or feel embarrassed. “Afraid I already did that.”

-

Hannibal puts on *Mahler: Symphony #5, Adagietto* and joins Will at the table.

Instead of sitting beside Hannibal, Hannibal had insisted that Will sit at the other end of the table. True equals, in all forms. Will accepted, and begun eating the beautiful dish in front of him.

Hannibal copies.

Giving an interesting quirk of brow, Hannibal tilts his head at Will. “The meat has an interesting flavor. It’s brazing. Notes of citrus.”

Will shrugs, absolutely loving the meal. “My palate isn’t as refined as yours. Just tastes like meat.”

Smiling, Hannibal swallows the contents in his mouth. “Apart from humane considerations,” he starts, putting some more meat onto his fork, “it’s more flavorful for animal to be stress-free prior to slaughter.” He takes a bite. Closing his eyes, chewing, and swallowing again, Hannibal sighs. “This animal tastes frightened.”

When Hannibal’s eyes open, Will asks, “what does ‘frightened’ taste like?” A smile broaches his lips; sweet and playful.

“It’s acidic.”

Will chuckles, taking another bite and rebelling in the exquisite taste. “The meat is bitter about being dead.”

“This meat is not pork,” Hannibal drawls obviously.

“It’s long pig.” Will goes to take a sip of his wine, but stops short, thinking. After a beat —“you can’t reduce me to a set of influences. I’m not the product of anything. I’ve given up good and evil for behaviorism.” He sips.

“Then you can’t say that I’m evil,” says Hannibal.

“You’re destructive, same thing,” Will shrugs, more than a statement than an insult.

“Evil is just destructive? Storms are evil, if it’s that simple. And then we have fire; and then there’s hail. Underwriters lump it all under ‘Acts of God.’ Is this meat an act of God, Will?”

Will takes a considerate bite. The flavors explode on his tongue for the hundredth time, and he closes his eyes to enjoy it. He's sad to swallow it, even if he knows there's more to be consumed.

"There is no God. No good or evil. So destruction. We just are."

Hannibal smiles—Will sees it as he opens his eyes again—"we just are."

Chapter End Notes

i hope you guys enjoyed!! very inexperienced when it comes to writing smut, so let me know what you guys thought!

also, i'm writing up a hannigram hp au????????? stay tuned for that bcz it's going to be amazing (if i say so myself)

Ko No Mono

Chapter Summary

Will finally accepts himself as a killer; and his undeniable love for Hannibal.

Chapter Notes

ok i lied this chapters also short BUTTT it's good trust trust TRUSTTTTT trust ok bye enjoy

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Yellow flames rise to the roof as Hannibal exits his kitchen and enters the dining room. Nothing of concern—he was holding a small tray, which, to Will's eyes, held contents being lit aflame. Hannibal gave him a meaningful smile, maneuvering to set down the tray between them. This time, neither of them sat at the head nor end of the table, but instead took two seats across each other in the middle.

"Among gourmands, the ortolan bunting is considered a rare but debauched delicacy. A rite of passage, if you will. Preparation calls for the songbird to be drowned alive on Armagnac. It is then roasted, and consumed whole in a single mouthful."

Will looks down at the ortolans, now that they were visible. The flames had snapped and lowered into nothing, instead leaving two, small, yellow birds in its wake. "Ortolans are endangered," Will replies.

"Who amongst us is not?" Hannibal asks, laying out his napkin upon his lap—at least, Will assumes so—he can't see beneath Hannibal's torso because of the table.

The question causes Will's brow to raise slightly in curiosity. "I haven't been gorged, drowned, plucked, and roasted," he defends. Then, for humor, adds, "not *yet*."

Hannibal offers a playful smirk, before moving on with the previous conversation. “Traditionally,” he starts, “during this meal, we are to place shrouds over our heads. Hiding our faces from God.” With a soft shrug, Hannibal continues, “I don’t hide from God.”

Reaching between them, Hannibal dips his hand into the small-sized bowl containing their ortolans. With his pointer and thumb, he picks one up by the skull. He holds it up, looking at Will with a delighted smile. Faux professionalism, and Will raises his own ortolan. The only thing Will *truly* feared about consuming this dish, was—

“Bones and all?”

“Bonds and all,” Hannibal confirms.

Slowly, *reluctantly*, Will lowers the bird to his lips, feet first. They part, allowing the dead, small animal to rest on his tongue. It slides back and back until only its beak was left. Will closes his mouth. Chews. The bones crunch beneath his teeth and the taste of figs, Armagnac, and flesh fill his taste buds. The bird burns his tongue with its heat—but Will continues to eat anyway. Guts and flesh fill him up. It’s only as he’s swallowing that he realizes the small bones have pierced his mouth in some locations—discovering this by the taste of iron drifting into his stomach. He looks up and at Hannibal, curious and intrigued as ever.

There were no words. No way to describe it.

Hannibal understood—he tips his head back and eats his own.

Will’s eyes close to drown in the flavor, taking in every squishy and meaty consistency upon his tongue. It’s only after he’s one-hundred percent swallowed it all, that his eyes drift open again. They meet Hannibal’s—who’s done, as well.

“After my first ortolan, I was euphoric. A stimulating reminder of our power over life and death,” Hannibal says. He picks up his fork and knife, breaking their eye contact and enjoying the rest of the meal around them.

Will pays less mind to him, staring off and into space. Seeing things no one besides him could. He sees Freddie die, again. The way her blood shoots out behind her.

"I was euphoric when I killed Freddie Lounds," Will admits.

Hannibal pauses, swallowing around whatever he'd just consumed. "Tell me," he requests, "did your heart race when you murdered her?"

"No, it didn't."

"A low heart rate is a true indicator of one's capacity for violence. Your design is evolving. Your choices affect the physical structures of your brain."

Comprehension joins Will's mind, and he shuffles to pick up his fork and knife. It's as he's started cutting into the rest of the meal that he replies, "killing is changing the way I think."

"Yes," Hannibal agrees—or, confirms, rather.

The two gaze at each other, as one—Will—consumes the rest of the dish. It, as all else that Hannibal's ever made, tasted amazing. Hannibal smiles at the look of pleasure on Will's face, stating, "you must understand that blood and breath are only elements undergoing change to fuel your radiance. Just as the source of light is burning." He gives a pleased smile to Will, then raises his wine glass to inhale and drink.

Will clears his throat to draw Hannibal's attention, then reaching to set the fork and knife upon his empty plate. He scoots it to the side, laying his forearms on the table ahead him. "Tonight, I will burn a fake version of Freddie's body. I had informed Jack a while ago that I'd need some form of prototype to put on display and please you with. I believe that making Freddie, in some aspect, an ortolan, could be quite meaningful."

Hannibal hums, setting down his wine glass as Will raises his own. "Yes, indeed. For she wasn't drowned, no, but she, in some way, was burnt. Then, once her flames went out, we

consumed her without hiding from God. No shame, just life and death. Only euphoria and the promise of sustenance from her body. Both giving and taking the honor she never offered you."

"Or you," Will adds, smiling softly.

-

Will took the rare liberty of sleeping at his own home that night. Majorly, he knew he'd be woken again soon with Freddie's case. Lighting her 'body' aflame and fleeing the scene was quite the adrenaline rush, and Will was excited to spend a peaceful night in the privacy of his home.

He missed his dogs.

They curled at his bed, Will even going a step further to invite Winston up with him. He was able to acquire roughly five hours of sleep like this, until his phone rang.

Course, he didn't have any confusion as to who it was.

-

"Orthodontics confirmed," Brian starts, "it's Freddie Lounds. A little bit of kerosene, *fwoomp*! Incendiary journalism."

Price hums, leaning forward and pointing at 'Freddie's' mouth. "See? No scabrous crush on her chin. She was dead before the match was struck."

"Blood's already pooled to the lowest parts of her body. Been dead at least twenty-four hours," Brian continues off of Price, glancing at Jack.

Will stands straighter, eyeing the fake body before him. “Freddie had a longing to be noticed… She was noticed.”

As Will starts walking around Freddie’s body, and stepping closer to Hannibal, Jack replies, “Freddie Lounds’s ultimate failing was her inability to keep herself out of her own stories.”

Hannibal steps up to Freddie’s body, beside Will.

“There’s more to this story. Check it out,” Brian starts, lifting the side of ‘Freddie’s’ body up.

Hannibal speaks this time, eyeing the lines and charred skin. “Severely-burned bodies tend to split along lines of musculature, but that looks like an incision,” Hannibal briefly looks to his right—where Will is.

“That’s right,” Brian says, pointing to her side. “He cut out her psoas muscles, with, uh, what looks like a hunting knife.”

“A peculiar trophy,” Hannibal comments.

“Why did he *burn her*?” Jack asks.

“How many people has Freddie Lounds burned in her career?” Brian points out.

Hannibal perks up, “whoever did this was not striking out against Miss Lounds’s exploitative brand of journalism. This is something else. This is something sacred.”

“Freddie Lounds had to burn. She was fuel. Fire destroys and it creates. It is mythical. She won’t rise from the ashes, but… Her killer will.”

“He’s the one to be noticed now.”

Jack looks between Hannibal and Will, who had been talking more to each other than anyone else. Opening up and describing Will’s kill on an emotional level.

From Freddie’s ashes, Will rose as a killer. New and inexperienced.

And he was noticed. He was *seen*—as Freddie craved—by Hannibal.

-

Hannibal pops open the door of Will’s car.

“Any plans for the day, Will?” Hannibal asks as Will descends into his car seat.

“No, not many besides the usual,” Will says with an indifferent shrug. “I haven’t had much… Time to myself. So I will most likely go fishing. Play with my dogs.”

Hannibal gives a polite smile. “Partaking in old hobbies, after turning your attention away, for a while, can be quite pleasant.” He closes the door to Will’s front seat, who rolls down the window. Hannibal leans over just slightly, looking at Will curiously. “Would it be rude of me to ask to join? To see Will Graham in his utmost happiness?”

Will snorts and shakes his head. “No. Long as you let me teach you how to fly fish.”

A nod, and Hannibal backs up from Will’s car. “Sounds great,” he confirms, turning on his heels and heading to his own pristine Bentley.

-

After a short day of hanging out with Hannibal, in the comfort of his own home, he and the man shower together. It's as safe-for-work as one could expect with Will and his *partner*, the two washing each other of the day.

Then, of course, a quickly received blow-job from Hannibal.

Will recalls being carried to bed after that, giggling and complaining that he could *walk*, and falling asleep in the killer's arms. When the next morning came around, there's a polite knock at the door. Sleepily, Will's shuffled from his stupor.

Hannibal gazes at him lovingly, and from the look of wake on his face, he had been up for quite a while.

Knock, knock, knock.

"Coming," Will calls out groggily, sitting up and shuffling over Hannibal's body (who'd let Will have the wall-side to his bed).

He pads over to the white door of his front house's and pushes it open. Applesauce, at *Alana's* feet, lets her tongue roll out of her mouth in a greeting. Trailing his eyes up, Will meets Alana Bloom's nose. Quite quickly, his dogs start rushing out and into the cold weather as they were so used to doing.

"Do we do friendly visits anymore?" Will asks.

The frown on Alana's face deepens. "This isn't a friendly visit."

"Oh," Will replies, sleep still fogging at his brain. He swallows. "Uh… What kind of visit is it?"

“I guess I’m trying to convince myself of something.”

One use of Will’s empathy disorder, and he *knows*. He sighs, rubbing one eye with the heel of his hand. “You’re worried I killed Freddie Lounds.”

Tears well in her eyes and Will feels some threaten his own. “Did you?” She asks, shakily.

Pushing himself back out of Alana and into himself was hard, first thing in the morning. He swallows *Alana’s* bump in *his* throat, then clears it. “What do you think?”

“I think that’s the wrong answer to tell somebody who is already wondering what you’re capable of,” Alana replies, brows furrowing.

Will steps forward; Alana steps back.

“I told everyone Hannibal was a killer and *no one* believed me,” a murderous grin, “just like *no one* would believe *you* if you said *I* was a killer.”

She steps forward again, making *Will* flinch backwards, this time. “I don’t think Hannibal is good for you and I think your relationship is destructive.” There’s obvious anger and resentment in her tone; perhaps jealousy.

“Hannibal’s good enough for you. You should be afraid.” Will hates to pin things back to Hannibal—but for Alana, that was simply characteristic of him. To mold her further into trusting Will, he says, “I want you to have something.” He disappears into the dark of his house, Hannibal sitting up in his bed.

His pants were off—he was—

Will swallows shyly and shakes his head, shaking his hand to tell Hannibal off silently. Hannibal, fingers wrapped around his own cock, stroking lazily, tilted his head.

Forcing his eyes away, and back to the task at hand, Will grabs his gun. He points it at Hannibal playfully, where Hannibal raises a free hand in surrender.

When Will returns outside, he has to force a grave face. Alana inhales with fear, backing further out of Will's porch. Will continues to approach until she trusts him enough to stop resisting.

"*Whoever* you are afraid of… Don't be afraid to *use it*. It takes nine millimeter rounds. Buy a box. Find a range," Will urges it into her hand, and she accepts it (thank *God*). "Practice."

He turns on his heels, closes the door behind himself, and sighs, staring ahead at an empty hallway.

"Sweet boy," Hannibal purrs from Will's 'everything' room. "Come, let me ease your mind."

Will glances over, has a minute mental battle, and heads back over to his bed. He lowers himself into Hannibal's lap, already exhausted.

Hannibal's (free) hand comes up to cradle Will's face. Sighing from the contact, one of Will's small, calloused hands reaches out to wrap with Hannibal's—which remove itself and allows its replacement. The man's breath hitches, head falling back to relax. The other hand of his, however, helps Will's boxers off his own straining cock. The large, perfectly manicured hand of Hannibal's wraps around Will's length, eliciting a wanton moan from Will.

"Talk to me," Hannibal breathes, no doubt close, since he got a head start.

"Nuh…" Will swallows. "Now?"

“Yes,” Hannibal replies, head rising again to kiss Will’s chin. In this position, Will had a couple inches of height to his advance.

Will whines as Hannibal’s thick thumb teases his slit. His hand slides up to jerk closer to Will’s cock’s tip, *just the way the fucker know he likes it*. He hums, the sound coming out high-pitched. “I have to keep leading—“ *whine*, “—Alana toward you. Because… *Because* she would think it weird if I sudden*ly* didn’t think it was you who was dangerous anymore. Makes me fuh-*heel* guilty. Gave her my gun.”

Hannibal kisses Will’s jaw, thrusting up into Will’s hand and exhaling shakily. “We will be fine,” Hannibal replies simply.

Will scoffs, followed *quickly* up by a gasp as Hannibal’s hand picks up speed. “Oh *fuck*—”

“That’s it, Will,” Hannibal grunts, nipping Will’s jaw—harsh enough to leave a mark, soft enough to not be too painful.

It’s fast, how easily Hannibal switches their position. He sits up, the free hand flinging over Will’s waist, and he flips them. Will beneath him, they begin their stroking again—Will from base to tip with Hannibal’s, Hannibal furiously over the head of Will’s. Their cocks so close, each upward stroke had the tips brushing. Will squirms and pants and feels tears threaten his eyes as he cums, back arching and thrusting into Hannibal’s hand. Hannibal follows him, coating both of their sleep-shirts in white seed.

Will, like any other time he and Hannibal fuck, forgets about all of his struggles and worries. Nothing, besides this moment, existed.

-

Unfortunately, Hannibal had to leave quite immediately after their… *Session* to get back to his office in Baltimore. *Mason* Veger, Margot Verger’s brother, had seemed to take to her therapist as well. Will had no doubt that Hannibal would mess with both of their minds until they killed each other.

Later in the afternoon, Will dressed himself for Freddie Lounds's funeral. His dogs were very content, since they'd seen Will so much more than they usually do, so Will played with all of them until the very last minute that he couldn't. He gave each a kiss to their furry cheeks, accepted their licks back, and headed to his car.

The scene was as bright as a graveyard could be—sun high and beaming in the sky, snow illuminated by it. There were plentiful of people gathered around Freddie's grave (*surprisingly*), but one person wasn't.

When Will gets close enough, he recognizes the woman. Alana Bloom. Cold wind deepening the chill already over Will, he walks up to her. Stops beside her.

She looks away—angry and holding a grudge. It was clear that Will gifting her his gun had helped *slightly*, however.

After a beat of silence, where they listened to the officiant give a couple of words, Alana says, "I'm here to mourn Freddie Lounds." She shakes her head. "Can't imagine that's why you're here."

"There's all sorts of reasons why I'd go to Freddie Lounds's funeral. It's common for a killer to revisit their victims after death. Attend funerals, return to crime scenes."

"Anyone suspicious?" She asks.

Will gives a soft huff of a laugh. "Besides me?"

"That was implied," she replies immediately, no humor in her tone. Will swallows.

"You were expecting me," he replies, tone stripped of any amusement it had previously. *Annoyed*.

“‘It’s common for a killer to revisit their victims after death,’” she reiterates.

“I’m not here to dance on Freddie Lounds’s grave, if that’s what you’re getting at.”

“You’re not here looking for her killer, either. You don’t seem particularly interested in the crowd.”

Will’s nose scrunches in disgust. “Are you *profiling* me, Dr. Bloom?” Silence. Will trains his face to be neutral again, though his tone was acidic and annoyed as he says, “I’m *here* because… My psychiatrist suggested it would be therapeutic.”

Alana angrily glares at him. Course, Will wasn’t told to be here via Hannibal—had just come because he wanted to—but he knew it’d tick Alana further into annoyance. And, well, Will was a man who enjoyed playing with fire.

She walks away, shaking her head at him.

-

After the funeral, Will drove to Baltimore to have a session with Hannibal. Hannibal greets him at the door politely, then valets Will’s car behind the building so he could go home with Hannibal.

Generally, Will didn’t have too much to talk about. He firstly brought up how all of the murders he’s committed still haunt him a *smidge*, then trailed off.

That’s when Hannibal asks Will about kids.

Will blinks, then replies, “I’ve been so preoccupied with taking a life, I’m, uh… Having trouble wrapping my head around *making* one.” He gives a small laugh, shaking his head. “I haven’t really… *Wanted* one since Abigail passed, either.”

Hannibal gives a guilty smile, which seems more like pitiful than remorseful. “When men become fathers,” Hannibal replies, “they undergo biochemical changes that affect the way they think.”

Will shrugs, tugging at the sleeve of his white sweater. “You said the same thing happens when men become killers.”

“Fathers can be killers.” Hannibal looks as though debating his next statements. Will waits, patiently, as the beat of silence blankets them. After such, he asks, “what sort of father would you be?”

“Why? Looking to find me another stray soon, Hannibal?” Will teases, smile pained but still bemused. He sighs, scratching his forehead. “I would be good father.”

Hannibal, sitting in the chair at his desk, peers at a Will, who was in a chair to the *side* of said desk. Hannibal hated to have patients who pushed his personal space—Will knew this. But, Will wasn’t really a *patient* anymore, was he?

“How quickly we form attachments to something that does not yet exist,” Hannibal comments.

“I’m not attached… I’m…” Will swallows, finding the words. “I’m only… *Anticipating* attachment.”

Hannibal hums. “We have a deep-seated need to interact with our children. It helps us discover who we are.”

Will's own interest piqued—seeing as Hannibal sounded as though he were speaking of experience.

Hell, they were already beating around the bush by talking about have *kids*, so, why not?

"Have you ever been a father?" Will asks.

Pain. It hits Will right in the chest and breaks his heart. Hannibal's eyes glisten with the emotion he bestowed into Will—both feeling, both knowing. "I was to my sister," he replies. "She was not my child, but she was my charge. She taught me so much about myself. Her name was…" There's a brief moment of hesitation. Hannibal had never let Will seen this side to him, and Will was certain he was anticipating rejection. Will softens his expression in hopes to encourage Hannibal open. It works, as Hannibal continues: "Mischa."

That's when Will realizes the past-tense. The tears and sadness clicked into place, even though he asks, "was?," anyway.

"She's dead," Hannibal swallows, breaking their eye contact. "Abigail reminded me so much of her."

Will heart pangs with sadness again, this time his own. Shakily, he forces out the question, "why did you kill her?"

"Occasionally I drop a teacup to shatter on the floor. On purpose," Hannibal replies. He's fighting a mental battle in his head—Will can see it—though he doesn't know *what* or *why*. "I'm not satisfied when it doesn't gather itself up again. Someday, perhaps, a cup will come together."

Will couldn't truly tell what Hannibal was saying. He killed Abigail because, unlike Will, when he broke her, she didn't evolve? She didn't grow? When Hannibal's eyes meet his again, he can see resolve. He can solution. He could see—

Oh, God—

Oh, *God*.

Will quickly stands from his chair. Hannibal looks at him, impressed as always that he didn't have to say the words—

Abigail was alive.

Hannibal looks up, where the balcony of the upstairs library was around Hannibal's office. Will whips around, next-to *running* towards the stairs. He grapples his way up, and when he finally levels out with the second floor, he looks down at Hannibal.

Tears had tracked down his eyes, though a huge smile was on his face.

Oh, God.

Will ran about the upstairs rooms until he finally found a locked one. He gave a knock. "Abigail?" He calls out. There's an eerie silence. "Abi—" his voice breaks, tears falling over his lower lids and streaming down his face. "Abigail, please come out."

Two hands on his hips. Will faces Hannibal, and without thinking, falls into him. Hannibal holds him up easily, letting Will sob out into his chest.

Abigail's alive, Will thinks. Warmth spreads through every crack and crevice of his body. His daughter was alive. He could teach her to fish. He—He and *Hannibal* could protect her from *everyone* and *everything*. What a beautiful gift this was—Hannibal revealing that he hadn't killed Abigail after all. Hannibal *trusting* Will enough to give him back their daughter.

"Abigail," Hannibal calls to the door, petting Will's hair as he calms. Tears had stopped streaming, but he occasionally hiccuped and moaned when he remembered what was going

on. *Who* he was about to see. “Will would like to see you. Please, come out.”

Hannibal’s permission seems to do the trick. There’s shuffling—just as hurriedly as Will’s had been—and a lock clicks out of place. Will looks up from Hannibal’s chest just long enough to see Abigail’s *beautiful* figure in the doorway.

He sobs. *She* sobs. Hannibal opens his arms up further to an Abigail (who, for one, doesn’t question the bear-hug Hannibal’s giving *Will*. And, *for two*,) who sprints forward and into both men’s arms. Will doesn’t care that Abigail isn’t biologically his daughter. He kisses her face and holds her and Hannibal tight, balling until he physically cannot produce tears anymore.

-

A loud sound bursts through Hannibal’s room. Will’s phone was ringing.

Everyone shifting awake, Will hurriedly slides over Hannibal to grab his phone. Being between Abigail and Hannibal had proved to be quite the problem after all. Will insisted for an *hour* that Hannibal let her sleep with them just this *once*. Hannibal reminded Will that Abigail was not a child, and didn’t—*shouldn’t*—be coddled like one.

Will didn’t care. And when Hannibal finally gave in, and Will got to tell Abi, she eagerly accepted. He fell asleep knowing she was safe in his arms. *Alive* and *well*.

When Will reads the word ‘*Jack’* on his screen, his previous, high mood shatters.

-

But oh, if Will had known he’d see *this*, he wouldn’t have felt so agitated.

Before him was an open grave—Freddie Lounds's. Her dead, charred body was in a sitting position. With arms coming out of her sides, a pair of her *actual* arms folded in a prayer in front of her, and a pair from her upper back aimed upward, Freddie Lounds was shaped into a courting gift.

Made by Hannibal.

"Extra parts were harvested on-site," Price tells Will. "Just one night in the ground, that beats Jesus by forty-eight hours."

"Never thought Freddie Lounds would make it to heaven," Brian says to his right, "much less get *deified*."

Jack and Alana join them from behind, Alana shooting suspicious daggers into Will's eyes. Will breaks the contact, looking at Jack, who says, "this killer is trying to get somebody's attention."

"He has direction," Alana agrees. "His chaos is getting more orderly."

"So first, he burns effigies, and now he's assembling them."

"Burning Freddie Lounds wasn't his first effigy. Whoever killed Freddie killed Randall Tier. Mutilated him, dismembered him, and put him on display."

"Randall Tier and Freddie Lounds have a connection."

"Will," Alana accuses immediately. Will glances back to her. "Randall Tier was his suspect and Hannibal's patient, and Freddie Lounds was investigating his murder when she died."

Will turns to face them, finally interjecting their conversation with, "Freddie Lounds was investigating a lot of things, when she died."

Alana states at him. Will stares back. Uninterested, Will turns to stare at Hannibal's gift to him.

Oh, Will would repay him passionately when he got home.

"This psychopath was incubating fantasies about killing and is building himself up. Or *someone's* building him up," Alana continues.

"He has a benefactor who admires his destruction," Will supplies honestly. "Shiva is both destroyer and benefactor."

"He's being guided."

"Is this some kind of signpost?" Jack asks, sounding disgusted. Surely enough, he looks away from the dead courting gift.

"Maybe Freddie's killer didn't do this…" Alana suggests, meeting Will's eyes. "Maybe his benefactor did."

Will swallows anxiously—they were getting *way* too close to the truth, yet he had no idea how to steer them away.

"Why?" Jack asks.

"It's a courtship," Alana realizes, her eyes widening at Will's. Neither of them knowing about Hannibal and Will's involvement was a surprise to Will. They were quite obvious about it—in his opinion.

"Yes," Will agrees, "yes, it is."

-

When Will gets back to Hannibal's home, Abigail is not in their room anymore. Will suspects it was a bit more awkward—Hannibal and Abigail weren't quite as father-daughter like he and her were. This was okay—he had a courtship to accept.

Will strips of his shirt, slowly. Hannibal's sleep-heavy eyes follow. They widen slightly. Shamelessly, he does as he had in the morning—lowering his boxers and pleasing himself to Will's show.

"Couple things to say, don't know where to start," Will admits, undoing the button on his pants. Hannibal's eyes follow as he slides open the zipper. As Will lowers the pants off his legs, steps out of them, and approaches Hannibal clad in boxers. He grabs their bottle of lube from Hannibal's nightstand, straddles the man, and gently pulls his neck with one hand to encourage Hannibal into a sitting position. "We are going to get caught, soon," Will continues, lathering his free hand in lube as the other caresses the skin at Hannibal's neck. He reaches behind him. Hannibal's breath hitches as Will's wet hand briefly contacts Hannibal's dick. He stares at Hannibal, tilting his head. Hannibal gets the hint, reluctantly removing his hand from his cock to move Will's boxers down and off of his ass. Will hums for praise, then breaching his hole with his pointer finger. Hannibal's hands finds his hips. Will shuffles as Hannibal uses his hands to encourage Will to *ride his finger*. Effectively missing his prostate every time he thrusts inward, Will continues. "I've made no more efforts to hide us."

Hannibal leans forward, kissing Will's jaw and moving down to his neck. He nips harshly, drawing blood and causing Will to whimper. He adds a second finger.

"We must leave soon, then," Hannibal confirms, hands turning to claws as they scratch roughly down Will's thighs and cause light pink streaks in their past. Will gasps, slips a third finger into himself, and bites his lip. He nods, which Hannibal feels. "We will take Abigail and go to Florence, I bargain. I have a home there. I can show you where I grew up."

Will sits up to remove his fingers from his prepped hole. "That sounds perfect," he whispers, looking downward so Hannibal removes himself from his neck. They stare at each other briefly as Hannibal now takes their bottle lube, lathers up his cock, and positions it by Will's hole. Will leans down, connecting their lips, and quickly smacks Hannibal's hands away.

“You’ve done quite enough with these, don’t you think? Above your head,” Will orders. There’s a flush over Hannibal’s cheeks—not used to giving up his control—and he obeys. Will smiles. As he leans down and over Hannibal, who was laid not with his hands gripping the headrest behind him, he bites harshly at *his* skin. “So good,” he praises, feeling Hannibal’s cock twitch and hit Will’s raised hips. “So beautiful, it was. Why did you make it?” More affectionately, Will slides up, kissing Hannibal’s neck, jaw, and cheeks.

“Because I love you, Will. Is that not obvious?” Hannibal answers.

Will freezes above him.

Had he heard that right?

“You love me?” Will asks, looking into Hannibal’s half-lidded eyes, dark with desire.

“I love you.”

Will swallows, looking for hints of manipulation in his eyes. There were none.

Hannibal *genuinely* loves Will. Where Will didn’t think such was possible, he was violently proven wrong.

His eyes soften, unlike his cock, which throbs from the intensity of Hannibal’s affection.

“I want to say it as simply as you do,” Will starts. He moves again, angling Hannibal with his hole, and he sits, taking it all in one go. A loud moan escapes his lips, as does one with Hannibal. He bites his lower lip to stifle his noises. Once Hannibal’s bottomed out, Will opens his eyes and releases his red lip from its capture. “But I… I would rather show you instead. Where love is giving up ultimate control, I intend to show you just how protected

your love is. And in return," Will sits up, pulling Hannibal with him, "I want to allow you to take my control, too."

Hannibal needs no other invitation. As Will sets a harsh pace with his hips, eliciting gasps and whines each downward movement, Hannibal bites roughly at his collar bone and neck and shoulder. Some are deeper than others, and Will feels *itchy* in so many locations. There are even some that have punctures deep enough to allow blood to track down Will's skin. While Will took Hannibal, and didn't allow Hannibal to touch, *he* ensured that Will knew who was making him feel good. Who he *belonged* to.

"Let me touch—" Hannibal grunts, "—*you*, Will."

Well, Will had enough control as is.

"*Please*," he begs.

He anticipated Hannibal to jerk him off, but instead, Hannibal hand swiped over his body and collected the blood.

And then he—

"Oh, *God*!" Will yells as a bloodied hand of Hannibal's wraps around his cock. The precum, sweat, and *his own blood* mix to provide a steady lubricant. Hannibal fists furiously over the head of Will's cock, and Will lasts so embarrassingly short.

White clouds his vision as he cums, right then and there, bouncing on Hannibal's dick. Even as he becomes limp in the fit of his orgasm, Hannibal shuffles to piston his hips upward. One hand grabs Will's hip to push him down, fucking him *hard* and *deep*, while the other continues to jerk off his spent cock.

"*Oh*, God, Hannibal—*stop*—please *stop*," Will begs. Unfortunately for Will, overstimulation *had* been a topic of discussion for them before—and Hannibal knew better than to stop. Tears

spilled over Will's eyes as pain and pleasure mixed, body overwhelmed. He continues to bleed, tan skin mixing with a light shade of red. His cock looked even worse—Will realizes, looking down at it—smeared in his own cum, blood, and precum. Course, he couldn't see too much of it, as it was covered by Hannibal's bloody, *messy* hand. Will scratched at Hannibal's back, trying to squirm out of his grasp, and failed miserably. "Oh, *please*," he whines, voice high-pitched and broken.

"So pretty when you beg," Hannibal grunts out, taking his pleasure. "Are you going to let me have you, Will?"

"*Yes*! Yes! Yes, Hannibal just please—"

All movement seizes, the only sounds in the room being frantic breathing and Will's obnoxious whine in relief. Hannibal empties himself inside Will, twitching and burrowing himself in Will's neck. They stay intertwined, panting and holding each other for what feels like *hours* to Will, before Hannibal pulls back and brushes the curls clinging to Will's skin.

"How are you?" He asks Will breathlessly.

Will, fucked out of his mind and happy beyond belief, *laughs*.

-

The next morning, since Will he hadn't much to do—was all about him and Abigail. Hannibal was in front of his dresser, using a hand mirror to check if his hair looked okay. Will snorts, sitting up sleepily and staring at Hannibal.

"Good morning, sweet Will, sleep well?"

"Yes. Patient?"

“Afraid so. Good thing you’ve got a new friend to keep you occupied, yes?” Hannibal teases, crossing the room and kissing the top of Will’s head. Will hums.

“Hannibal?”

The other man stops. “Yes?”

Will swallows, smiles, and whispers, “I do *love* you, you know.”

Hannibal lovingly caresses his chin. “Yes, I do,” he says certainly.

-

“Fishing?” Abigail questions.

Will had driven he and Abigail back to his home in Wolftrap. She’d greeted his dogs, who excitedly hopped all over her, and looked around at his house. She comforted him as they packed some of Will’s things—preparing for he and Hannibal’s escape. Will was sad to let go of this house. Sad to let go of his *dogs*. Hannibal had supplied Will with a man who could discreetly take them off to a *good* shelter, and find them a *good* home. The man got there fairly quickly, and before Will knew it, he and Abigail had been sitting on his porch, his heart broken.

That was when she suggested that they go fishing. Will had babbled on the way over about teaching her how to do so. He confessed that he dreamt of fishing with her while he was in prison. Even shyly admitted that he still does.

Abigail reluctantly told Will that she didn’t have too much of an interest in fishing—since it was more about *baiting* than *hunting* like her *actual* father had taught her—but Will didn’t mind this too much. It was always just a dream of his, of course…

Will perks up, now, smiling broadly. “You… But you—”

Abigail waves her hand, replying, “why not?”

-

Will and Abigail head back over to Hannibal’s home, nearly there when Hannibal had called him. He tells Abigail to pick up the phone for him.

Abigail does so, bright and tired from all of the activities they had caught up on, greeting Hannibal with a “hello.”

There’s talking on the other side, though Will can’t hear it.

Then, Abigail starts talking again. “Yes, Will’s driving right now, so he asked me to pick up for him. Oh! Well, we fished, and I met his dogs, we said goodbye to them of course… It was depressing, but I think Will is doing better… Yes, yes we got some of his clothes. We’re bringing them home right now. Will left just enough to casually live in his house and now lure any eyes until we move… Oh? Well, okay, one second,” Abigail removes the phone from her ear, looking over at Will (who vaguely reciprocates, still trying to focus on the wheel). “Hannibal says he may get caught up tonight. I guess a woman named Margot Verger was harmed by her brother. Hang on…” Abigail puts the phone to her ear again.

Will’s stomach gives an uncomfortable twist. He was very minutely friends with Ms. Verger, but she understood him quite well. They went through similar things, and just *got* each other in a way. The thought of her brother (who she tried to kill; Will knows that) harming her made him want to investigate further.

Abigail removes the phone again. “He’s asking if you want the address—since he knows you two had a bit of a relationship. He understands if not… Oh, and says to wait up for him at home.”

“Tell him to give me the address.”

-

Will dropped Abigail off at Hannibal’s home, asking her to unpack his things for him, and sped off into the night again. He had parked his car in the parking lot of the Baltimore Hospital, seen an asleep Margot, and turned to Hannibal with confusion.

“What’d he do?” Will inquires.

“Well,” Hannibal sighs. “Margot’s been trying for a baby. She was able to sort of… Lure a random man into impregnating her—”

“What? Margot told me she didn’t have the parts to reproduce.”

“She lied. She often uses that so men do not feel the need to use protection in their proclivities with her. It’s likely she, at first, intended it to be *you* whom impregnated her,” Will gapes at this, “but alas. She found someone else, and Mason discovered the truth. He took everything out.”

Will’s brows furrow with rage, righteous and injustice, and *confusion*. “He *took everything out*?”

-

Will wasn’t sure what he was doing or why. He didn’t know why he went to the Verger’s estate. Why he stalked up to where he knew Mason to be, and positively fumed at him.

“You must be the baby daddy,” Mason teases him, smiling.

Will doesn't bother correcting him. He knew what he wanted to do—Mason didn't have to be *aware*. He was as good as dead.

"Excuse me if I don't offer you a cigar—"

Punch.

Mason holds the side of his face, Will enjoying the feeling of *murder* through his bones again. Standing up more straight, Mason swipes the blood from beneath his nose and *licks it off his fingers*.

His head falls back, fuming with Will, now. "*Aha*! I'm going to feed you to my pigs. Carlo!"

Will tackles him. Mason crazily laughs and giggles as a panting, *angry* Will shoves him back and over his pig pen. The pigs which were trained to eat human.

He gives one last look at Mason—debating on teasing him. But truly, the delirious man didn't desire much more context.

He dropped him. Course, he had to pry a now panicky Mason's hands from his jacket, but he finally let go.

He slips down and hits the ground with a hard *thud*. Pigs squeal and circle about him. Will turns as screaming sounds around the room, panting and wiping his hands on his pants.

His *fucking* work here was *done*.

Chapter End Notes

y’all so much of the og episode no longer fit with my version so i either had to cut it out or COMPLETELY rewrite the scene 😭 that’s why it’s short…

but i hope you guys enjoyed seeing will reconnect with abi, and their admissions of love to each other, bcz i effing loved writing those scenes

Tome-Wan

Chapter Summary

> Hannibal and Will struggle to hide their obvious kills from the FBI. Will urges he and Hannibal to get a move on—perhaps with one last, big bang.

Chapter Notes

> you may notice i added on a chapter and im so sorry for everyone who was expecting this to be the finale :,,,) i can't count, apparently…..

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Can you explain my actions?"

Sitting across from him, in his usual chair inside of his office, Hannibal shows a quirk of brow in intrigue.

"Can you posit my intentions? What would be your theory of my mind?"

"I have an understanding of your state of mind," Hannibal replies, "you understand mine. We're just alike. This gives you the capacity to deceive me… *And* be deceived *by* me."

While Hannibal was, in his entirety, a slippery slope, Will had no doubt that he wasn't being deceived by Hannibal. In some way, Hannibal had to agree on Will's behalf.

Where Hannibal thoroughly enjoyed doing things to see what consequences the experience bared, he knew better than to cross Will. Especially after the time they'd put into each other.

Especially when he knew that the FBI was conspiring with Will to capture Hannibal, as they spoke.

That Will was in charge.

Having control over Hannibal was infeasible to most. He could sliver out from Will's grasp, still, if Will *had* been deceiving him.

However… "I'm not deceiving you, Hannibal," Will replies. Because that was true.

Will, honestly, figured that murdering Freddie Lounds, Randall Tier, and Mason Verger was more than enough proof as to his… *Development*. Adaption.

"I'm… Just pointing out the snare around your neck," Will finishes. Trying to discover when a good time for them to leave would be was quite the impossible task, nowadays. With bodies dropping here and there (because of Will), neither have the option to up and run.

Well… They *could*. But still, when things were more calm, that'd be the ideal time to run.

"What you do about it is entirely up to you," Will reminds Hannibal.

Hannibal points a finger in Will's direction, slight confusion painting his face as he says, "*you* put the snare around my neck."

Will beckons his head downward, giving a small, knowing look. *He was doing what he had to*—the look said.

"Why did you kill Mason Verger?" Hannibal asks, shifting the subject.

Veritably, Will replies, “when I got to the Verger Estate, I hadn’t intended to. Not really, I don’t think. But then I was… Curious what would happen.” Will gives a smirk to Hannibal, who very often did things because *he* was curious about the result. Will shrugs. “Not necessarily an *incorrect* action though, Hannibal. You wanted to kill him,” Will had taken a good peek at the files of Hannibal’s patients, and he knew better than anyone that Mason was *not* someone Hannibal would like, “*or* you wanted me to kill him. That was why you told me about Margot, was it not? Either way, you like that he’s dead, and you’re glad one of us did it. I’m just… Wishing you hadn’t gone against the rules I implemented *months* ago.” Looking off, feeling petty and sour, Will sighs through his nose.

“Mason was discourteous. And discourtesy is unspeakably ugly to me.”

“Yes, so let me send my boyfriend into an emotional spiral and have him take out Mason like some kind of *knight in shining armor*.”

When Will looks back to Hannibal, Hannibal’s frowning at him. Like this wasn’t his fault. Ultimately, Will decides, he’ll let this slide.

Technically speaking , even if manipulated by Hannibal—Mason Verger got what was coming to him.

“Are you thinking about eating him?” Will asks.

“Whenever feasible, one should always try to eat the rude,” Hannibal replies playfully, seeing the relaxation in Will’s position again. Unfortunately, Will had given Mason to his pigs, so they were unable to consume him.

Will, who *still* wasn’t over-the-roof about cannibalism, didn’t mind too much.

“Would you join me at the table?” Hannibal asks, playing into their imaginary scenario where they had Mason’s body available to them.

“Mason Verger was a pig… And he deserved to be somebody’s bacon,” Will replies, smiling back at Hannibal.

Hannibal, smiling brightly, leans back into his hair and relaxes. “You said you were curious what would happen. I want you to close your eyes, Will. Imagine what you would *like* to have happened.”

Lids cover ocean eyes, drowning him out of the present and reeling him back in time. When Hannibal first prompts him to do this, he doesn’t really imagine that he would want another outcome.

But Hannibal’s there, this time. Instead of going home after Will departs to the Verger Estate, they both do. At home, Hannibal joins Will in his Honda (as it would be suspicious for *Hannibal’s* Bentley to appear at the Verger Estate. Too many connections and Hannibal would get caught, ultimately, of course.) and they take off toward the Estate.

Time flies as they anticipate their together-kill. Will charges in first, Hannibal instructed to wait twenty seconds. Will gives a rough punch to the side of Mason’s face. Mason laughs and demands that he will feed Will to his pigs. Will would rush forward, sweep Mason’s feet from below him, and securely pin him down as to prevent escape. Then, once Hannibal had finally joined them, they’d shuffle him into Mason’s straight-jacket, hoist him up onto his clip (which goes over and down into the human-eating pig pen), and prepare Will’s knife. Hannibal would angle himself to Will’s side, overlap their hands, and they’d slice his neck together—squirting blood coating their shirts and faces.

‘Course, it’d end with Mason getting dragged backward and down into the pen—dying once and for all.

His lashes flutter open.

“What did you see?” Hannibal asks.

Will smiles, looking down at his sleeves to avoid eye contact.

“You, of course.”

-

The next few days passed in a pleasant breeze. Mason’s death was automatically assumed to be an accident—that he’d fallen into his pen and died. When the police discovered that Mason *trained* the pigs to even *eat* human flesh—they came to Will’s same conclusion. He got what was coming to him.

For privacy reasons, Hannibal, Will, and Abigail hang out majorly at *his* home. Wolf Trap was very deserted, after all.

Will taught Hannibal to fish, even though the man next-to *hated* it. It almost always ended with Hannibal pretending to have heard a noise behind him—where Will was—and tackling him into the water. Will had so many cuts and bruises from rocks, and so many soaked clothes sitting in his dirty launder basket—but he’d never been happier.

Abigail, over time, actually grew fond of fishing. There were many mornings where she woke before Will *or* Hannibal, would eat breakfast, then wake up Will for fishing. It was always close to five in the morning when she did this. Will would kiss an unconscious Hannibal’s forehead, tell him where he was off to, and they’d skedaddle to his river. They idly chatted while they fished, mainly just Will introducing Abigail to all kinds of species of fish that existed.

She loved it. She had even confessed that it was better than hunting. Will agreed whole-heartedly, admitting that he could never see himself killing off a deer or bunny or anything innocent of such.

“But fish are innocent,” Abigail had pointed out.

Will clicked his tongue and shrugged. “*Yeah*, but… I don’t know,” he laughed, and so did she, “it’s different!”

Abigail nods, facing her pole again. “No, yeah, you’re right. I couldn’t explain how either, but killing fish is much easier than deer or bunnies.”

“Well, maybe because they’re on land like us. They’re mammals and they reproduce similar. They’re just living. Fish, we never really see them unless we’re by a body of water. They’re so unlike us, and so *tasty*, that we just…”

“Leave our morals behind?” She suggests.

Will nods. “Yeah. Yeah, I’d say so.”

About three days later, with Hannibal having next to no patients and never having to leave, they received a call from Margot. She requested that they visit her.

Of course, Will was very eager to see Margot. He could tell that, besides Abigail and Hannibal, he had a chance of making a more *normal* friend. One that would still accept him after his… *Becoming*.

-

“They could have done what was done laparoscopically,” Margot says, emotion devoid in her tone. She trained herself to be unemotional for years, Will knows. And, having a brother like Mason, this made sense. “*But*, my brother told them to leave a scar.”

Will frowns, standing to a sitting Margot’s right. “He branded you,” he says.

“Mason wants you to know this can never be undone,” Hannibal says, to Margot’s left—*also* sitting. Will needed to find a chair…

“*Mason* was undone,” Will replies after Hannibal, shrugging.

“Not without taking everything I have with him,” Margot replies, faintest hint of disappointment in her voice. Without a male heir, Mason’s death left her completely and utterly alone.

Well. Will hadn’t really thought about *that*.

“He was all I had, after he did this to me. That’s exactly what he wanted. He won,” a silent tear tracks down her cheek, “he *always* wins.”

Will paces, anxious and guilty.

“This won’t make you human, Margot, so much as give you the ability to make yourself human and move on,” Hannibal consoles. When Will looks up and meets Hannibal’s eyes, there’s daggers telling will to *be still*. But Will simply couldn’t. He shook his head, breaking eye contact and continuing to pace.

“I suppose that’s the only thing left I can do. There’s no resolve to this. There’s no resolution.”

“Moving on isn’t just a distraction… It’s a rebuke.” Will stills. He glances at Margot, who allows Will in ever-so-slightly. Although Will shouldn’t really feel pride that she trusts him more than Hannibal, he does. He was but a man, after all, always chasing competition and success. He couldn’t be blamed. “Show your brother how strong you are. Survive him.”

Will’s eyes drift from Margot’s nose to *Hannibal’s* eyes. Hannibal wasn’t competitive like Will, so all Will finds is admiration and love. He looks at Will, so proud and in love, that Will feels the guilt and anxiety leave him.

Margot didn’t know anything. That was okay. All she needed was the courage to keep going.

-

As Hannibal and Will depart from the Verger Estate—this time to visit Margot, not kill off another one of them—Will remembers his next task for the day. He cringes, and Hannibal looks over curiously. He pops open the passenger-side door, letting Will in.

"I'll tell you on the way there," Will says.

-

Will walks through the station with a destination in mind. Jack had called a '*meeting'* to discuss capturing Hannibal. Of course, Hannibal had to drop Will off quite a couple blocks from the station, but they'd kissed goodbye anyway. Hannibal planned to take Abigail back to his home in Baltimore, and promised to get Will later in the day. Without his car, Will couldn't quite go anywhere. But he figured he'd catch some lunch in the city, then call Hannibal when halfway through about coming home.

So, the plan was all set.

Now—the *lying*. Will always dreaded this part of his job.

Initially, when Will *made* the undercover plan to capture Hannibal, he hadn't known he'd emotionally bond with him. He had, now, and everything was slipping from his finger. He was *no* professional liar.

"Will," Jack greets, closing the door quickly behind him. "Anything new?"

The immediate prompt makes Will want to fidget. He keeps a neutral expression, instead, responding, "Hannibal has a certain personality style we can all learn from. In moderation, of

course," Will half-jokes. He tugs the tie on his suit, feeling like it's too tight. He realizes *why* it feels that way, and acts natural again. Wearing suits, in general, was unnatural for Will.

"*All* I want to do is *catch him*," Jack says, approaching Will again and urging a plan.

"He's given me *nothing*, Jack. Nothing actionable. He has confessed to nothing. He's *acknowledged* only vagaries."

Hands moving around in urgency, *impatience*, Jack replies, "I need more than *vagaries*. You have *killed someone*, Will."

Will's heart skips a beat—*oh*. *He meant Randall Tier… Right*. "Who was trying to kill *me*."

Jack shakes his head, pacing, "I don't know if I can *prove* that. You mutilated the body!" Jack pants, hand clasping over his mouth to focus and not get angry. It was valid, as a response, so Will gives him a second. Then—"We made a public spectacle of Freddie Lounds's death. I'm *out on a* limb *here* and the limb is going to break! I've only told the OIG what they need to know. Now, *what haven't you told me*?"

Will, for dramatic affect, allows anger to show. More passion to be *heard* rather than anger, really. He replies, "*nothing*! He has done absolutely *fucking* nothing and I have *nothing*. All I know, that could be *remotely* new, is that Hannibal's major motive is the rude. It's as though commuting murders has… *Purged* him of lesser rudeness."

"We're talking about putting many life's in danger, in that case."

"*Sometimes* Jack, a good plan is less about finding the best alternatives, than it is about finding one that works."

"Don't let empathy confuse what you want with what Lecter wants," Jack shifts, making Will's brows furrow together.

“I told you, Jack. I’m a good fisherman,” Will defends—offended that Jack even *dare* say that Will’s empathy was causing him to get violent. This was nothing of the sort.

Was it?

“We have to use the right bait. When Hannibal tries to kill his next victim, I’ll arrest him, and you’ll have two witnesses.”

“We might have *three*,” Jack corrects. Then, for pettiness—“I’m a good fisherman too, Will.”

Will watches, confused, as Jack almost storms out of the room. Then, he realizes Jack’s leading him to accentuate his speech. Will follows him to a detaining room, wondering *who* Jack could’ve found to be their third witness in a crime that only the-next-victim and Will would see.

They stop, turning towards the one-way glass.

Beldelia Du Maurier paces on the other side.

Shit. Shit, shit, shit.

-

Will’s certain, as he enters the detaining room with Beldelia, that she *knows* as soon as their eyes meet. She *knows* Will no longer is who he was *months* ago; in that *cell*.

Setting down his case files, Will sits across from her. He tries not to sigh as he says, “they tell me you were hard to find.”

Why would you let yourself be caught?

"That was the idea," she whispers in reply. Where Will defended and protected Hannibal because he loved him, Beldelia did it because she knew death would knock at her door otherwise.

"Thank you. For visiting me in the hospital. And, uh… For what you said," Will replies. At one point, her words had been everything to him. *I believe you*, they were.

And God, how good it felt. For even just *one* person to *fucking listen*.

"I didn't say enough," Beldelia replies.

Will nods, hint of amusement in his voice as he says, "and nows your change to say it all. You've been granted immunity to prosecution by the U.S. Attorney from District Thirty-Six and by local authorities in a memorandum attached, sworn and attested." He pushes paperwork towards her. With one quick glance, she pushes them off to the side. "Let's talk about Hannibal Lecter."

"Some psychiatrists are so hungry for insight that they may try to manufacture it. How deadly that can be for the patient who believes them."

"You were Hannibal's psychiatrist," Will says, "he wasn't yours."

"I told myself that, but I was under Hannibal's influence. What he did to you made that abundantly clear."

Will swallows, uncomfortable. His lips open with an audible click, "You were attacked by a patient who was formerly under Hannibal's care. That patient died during the attack. Report said he swallowed his tongue."

“It wasn’t attached at the time.”

Will blinks.

Oh.

“How… *Exactly*… Did your patient die?”

There’s a beat of eerie silence before Beldelia replies, “I killed him.” She looks off and towards the one-way glass, where Jack was standing watching them. She may not have been able to see him, but the affect was made. She turns back to Will—who was still slightly stunned by this turn of events. Then, she says, “I believed it was self-defense. And to a *point* it was, but *beyond* that point, it was *murder*.” Silence. Seconds later, “Hannibal influenced me to murder my patient, *our* patient.”

“You weren’t… Coerced?”

“What Hannibal does is not coercion. It is persuasion.” She looks down, briefly, then meets Will’s eyes again—though he looks at her nose. “Has he ever tried to persuade you to kill anybody?” Will doesn’t respond. “He will,” Beldelia says for him. “And it will be somebody you *love*. And you will think it’s the *only* choice you have.”

Will shuffles, uncomfortable.

Unless Hannibal *actually* killed Abigail via *persuading* Will to do it—which would never happen—or make him kill *himself*—which would also never happen, since Will knows he wouldn’t win against Hannibal—this was infeasible.

Right?

“How would you catch him?” He asks, shifting conversation.

“Hannibal can get lost… In self-congratulation at his own exquisite taste and cunning. *Whimsy*. That will be how he will get caught.”

Indeed.

But, not anymore.

-

“We are maintaining our position on the event horizon of chaos,” Hannibal poetically states.

Will, in his passenger seat, doesn’t really feel like talking to Hannibal. His chat and interrogation with Beldelia left him deep in thought.

Though, he knows to communicate with a partner. Knows it heals.

Will supposes he doesn’t have to do so without expressing his anger or annoyance.

So, he decides to lay it all out for Hannibal. Right here—in this car.

“Your veneer of self-composure gives a *strong* sense of the surreal.” He sighs, looking over to Hannibal as he drives. “So much about this feels like a dream.”

“Dreams prepare us for waking life,” Hannibal replies, looking over at Will briefly, then back to the road with a content smile.

“It’s one thing to dream; it’s another to…” Will looks forward with him, “understand the nature of the dream.”

“You’re waking up to who you are. That’s all you need to understand.” Hannibal reassures, right hand relieving the wheel to hold Will’s thigh. It’s so uncharacteristic, and almost *immature* for Hannibal to do. Hold his thigh while he drives like they’re *normal* and *young*. Will stays silent, and Hannibal pitches, “there are extraordinary circumstances here, Will. And unusual opportunities.”

Will tilts his head, even though Hannibal can’t see it. He makes no move to touch Hannibal’s hand on his leg as he replies, “for whom?”

“For both of us.”

“Mason Verger was an opportunity?”

“Mason Verger was a problem. Problem solving is hunting. It’s a savage pleasure, and we’re born to it,” a squeeze to Will’s thigh, “a pleasure we can share.”

Will clicks his tongue, moving his hand down to trace shapes into Hannibal’s hand. Hannibal smiles, hums, and squeezes again. With annoyance, never so turned-off in Hannibal’s presence, Will tugs the hand off of him and urges it toward the wheel. Immediately, Hannibal looks over with confusion, high energy melting away to pool at their feet.

“You’re fostering codependency,” Will says, glaring into his eyes.

Hannibal turns away, eyes on the road again. Will rolls his eyes and copies.

“Is that what I’m doing?”

“Isn’t that what you did to Abigail?” Will sneers, past hatred and violence rising to the surface—one’s he thought were dead. “Got her to take a life so she would owe you hers?” Hannibal doesn’t reply, so Will turns in his seat to face him. Hannibal, very swiftly, makes eye contact and breaks it again. “I bond with Abigail, you take her away. I bond with… Barely more than the idea of a child—you take it away. You saw to it that I alienated Alana. Alienated Jack. You don’t want me to have anything in my *life*, that’s not *you*.”

“I only want what’s best for you,” Hannibal replies quickly.

“*Please*,” Will whispers, eyes rolling again. He settles back into his seat again, facing forward. “Every moment of cogent thought under your psychiatric care is a *personal victory*.”

“You’re applying yourself to my perspective… As I’ve been applying myself to yours.”

Will scoffs. Getting all of his ramble out relaxed the tension slightly inside him. He breathes more effectively, calming himself. “You’re right. We are just alike.” He looks out the window. Shrugs with pettiness. “You’re as alone as I am. And we’re *both* alone, without each other.”

The car parks, and before Will can open the car door, Hannibal locks it. Will turns slowly in his seat to deadpan at Hannibal, who tilts his head innocently.

“What is it you want, Will?” Hannibal questions. It should sound accusatory, but it doesn’t—Hannibal wants to fix Will’s mood.

Will relaxes back into his seat, not looking at Hannibal.

What did he want?

“I want a boyfriend who doesn’t take away everything and anything from me that isn’t him.”

“I gave you back Abigail. I did take her a while ago to isolate you, yes, but I wished you happiness. I knew her return would grant you that. Did it not?”

“*Yes*,” Will replies, annoyed. “Yes, it did. But… *Still*.” He looks at Hannibal, who’s at an impasse—doesn’t know what to do. Will wishes he could just read Will’s mind and figure out, for them *both*, what would improve Will’s mood.

“Where is this coming from?”

“Beldelia.”

Hannibal purses his lips. “You visited her today?”

“No, I interrogated her. ‘*Has he ever tried to persuade you to kill anybody? He will. And it will be somebody you love. And you will think it’s the only choice you have*.’”

A hand brushes the curls from his face. Even though he doesn’t want to, he relaxes into the touch easily. Hannibal squeezes in reassurance. Will sees him lean forward, holding Will in place by his hair, and stares at him intensely. He gives Will a beat of silence to decide to fight —in which he doesn’t. Hannibal pecks his lips.

“I will *never* make you kill. Not Abigail. Not *me*. Not any future stray you bring into our future home. *No one you love*.”

And Will believes.

-

After resting and lounging about the Lecter household, Will is shunned to the upstairs bedroom. This is because Hannibal has Jack over for dinner, and Will… Well, of course, shouldn’t be caught here.

Sleeping and dating your therapist was quite unorthodox, after all.

Hours later—two, probably—Hannibal returns upstairs. He changes into his pajamas.

Will slides out of the large bed Hannibal owned, walking up beside him and wrapping his arms around Hannibal's waist from behind. The man hums, picking out matching pajama pants for the shirt he'd picked and lay in his arm to equip. All he *currently* had on was boxers.

Being shorter than Hannibal, Will could kiss at Hannibal's shoulders and back quite well from this angle. Hannibal gives another him to *those*, and gasps slightly to the nips that Will playfully leaves. When Hannibal tries to put on the pants he'd found, Will pushes them out of Hannibal's hands. Hannibal freezes in confusion, then obeys Will—dropping them.

"I want you," Will whispers up and into Hannibal's ear. "I want to… Work out some tension from last night, truthfully enough, but I also just…"

Hannibal turns in Will's grasp, clutching either side of his face. Will is forced to look up at Hannibal and meet his eyes—who's looking at him with so much love that Will thinks he might just *die*. Right then. Right there.

"Tell me how you want me, Sweet thing," Hannibal urges, working to pick Will up. Will gives a playful smile, used to this kind of treatment by now.

It isn't until Hannibal's laid him on his back, kissing gently at his torso and stomach, lowering to his knees, that Will responses, "just you." Hannibal snags Will's boxers down, causing Will's breath to hitch. "Gently. I want your love."

Hannibal—the *tease*—kisses Will's tip and rises again. Will's about to pout, but Hannibal's wrapped a hand around him. Will sighs, head falling back to the sheets below him.

“Everything I have to offer is yours,” Hannibal whispers. “*Always*.”

-

The next morning, Will’s brought back home by Hannibal along with Abigail. Departing to get to a patient, he and Abigail make breakfast together in his home. His kitchen was left in shambles by the end of it—flour and egg and fuck all else *everywhere*—but Will didn’t mind too much.

Snow crunches outside. Will’s brows furrow, eyeing Abigail who was glancing out of the window. He hisses, quickly jumping in front of her.

“Okay, come on, like we practiced,” Will whispers. The two rush up Will’s stairs to the second floor, Abigail running after him and into a stray guest room. Will waits a second to make sure she’s safely hidden inside, before walking back downstairs. He tugs a jacket off of the coat-hanger by his door, and after a second glance, grabs his new gun.

The bitter weather slaps his skins, chilling him inside and out. A limo was in front of his house.

The hell?

Will approaches it, squinting and trying to peer inside. A man exits from the back, quickly circling Will and holding a gun to his head.

Oh.

Will holds his arms up immediately, heart skipping beats to catch up to a heavy, fast rhythm.

“Who are you?” Will asks. The man ignores him as a second and third exit, tapping Will’s body. They find Will’s gun, of course, tossing it into the grass. Two beats later, Will was

being shoved into the vehicle.

-

The voices echoing around him are blurry. Will blinks his vision into focus frantically, trying to remember who he was and how he got here.

His eyes finally fix themselves on a dangling figure across from him. Another approaches him, steadily, a black blob skirting forward. Will gives another blink, and everything is finally clear.

Hannibal was wrapped in a straight-jacket, dangling on Mason's hook, which led into the human-flesh-eating pig pen. There was a man named Carlo (Will picked up this name through his wake) with a knife to his neck. Fortunately, before Will can even process that Hannibal's about to *die*, the man stops and looks over to Will.

"Ah, good afternoon, Monsieur Graham. Was wondering how long the drug would keep you out."

Will blinks in confusion. *Drug*? When had Will been *drugged*?

Carlo turns to Hannibal again. Finally, it clicks into place for Will that this must be one of Mason's men. Trying to avenge Mason after death, his men rounded he and Hannibal up.

But something was odd about this situation… Will wasn't tied down. He looks down at himself, sees himself in a sitting position—but there are no restraints.

Carlo doesn't know Will did it… He thinks—

Oh.

And, for some reason, Mason and Margot must have discussed Hannibal and Will's relationship in front of Carlo. He most likely wasn't involved in the actual conversation—being just *one of Mason's men*—but he figured Will to be on his side.

"Join us, Will," Carlo invites.

Cautiously, Will rises from the wooden chair he was sat upon. He had to be smart. One wrong move, convincing Carlo that Will wasn't on-board with seeing Hannibal *dead*, and it would only take the press of a button for the man to be led to his demise.

Will would have nothing. He would have to stand, and watch, and when Carlo realized just how distressed Will was acting, he'd likely kill him too.

The idea of dying with Hannibal wasn't necessarily a *bad* idea. Not to Will.

But like this—by *Mason's* hand?

Margot's voice rings in his head, saying, '*he always wins*.'

Perhaps this would be Will's chance to prove her wrong.

"The swine may be shy with starting with the toes so we need to encourage them with a little sauce, huh?" Carlo says, smiling wickedly. Carefully, Will gets as close as he can to Hannibal—stepping further forward each time Carlo wasn't watching him. "So we're gonna cut your throat." Carlo steps up to Hannibal's suspended body, knife clutched in hand. Will half-wonders if he should just *pounce* and pray for the best.

But Hannibal looked so *calm*. He had no worries at all.

So, Will followed Hannibal's lead. When Hannibal—who hadn't taken his eyes off Will—saw the submission and guidance in Will's eyes, his own positively twinkled in response. Will gives a soft smile, quickly replacing it with a neutral expression as Carlo begins again…

"Mason says you were an *odd* psychiatrist. Claims you two would have had good, funny times together. '*It's a damn shame*!,' he'd said." Carlo turned away from Hannibal—thank God—and started approaching Will. Will's heart beat felt audible with how obnoxiously hard it was going. "In training, he'd say he'd muzzled the pig, and I'd be at my time to put him down."

Will extends his hand, not even bothering to look at Carlo. Carlo puts the knife in his empty hand.

Step, step, step, Will approaches Hannibal. Even the man, who should *know* Will won't kill him, tilts his head in excitement for what may come. *Curiosity*. It always drove Hannibal at the end of the day.

It takes two seconds. While Carlo and other men of Mason's watch Will approach Hannibal, Will swings the man around effortlessly. It's almost beautiful, their timing. He slices down the back of the straight-jacket, and Hannibal's feet hit the ground with a *thud*.

Will doesn't have much time to see how things will play out—someone must of hit their gun to the back of his head—encompassing him in black.

Hannibal is okay, is all Will can think.

-

Warmth. It's all that Will can feel when he's shuffled from his stupor. It surrounds him like a comforting blanket—all besides his neck, actually—Will realizes. There's someone touching him, too. His cheek is experiencing pressure, tender and gentle.

“Will?” A voice calls, though sounding distant. Will vaguely wonders if he’s underwater… “Can you hear me, Will?”

Like an epiphany, Will remembers he’s capable of opening his eyes. He snuggles into the hand on his cheeks and forces his eyes open.

Hannibal. He almost looks like an angel—surrounded by white light, so, so bright.

Very, very… *Very* bright—

Will groans, closing his eyes again. He angles his head down to open them again, and he’s met with water. It’s soapy, but generally clear, and Will can see the rest of his body, pale beneath the whitening stream. He hums—the warmth made sense, now.

“I’m sorry, I would shut the light off if I could. Would you like to go to bed?”

“Where am I?” Will asks sleepily.

Hannibal comes into view, sitting beside the tub. “In my bathtub, in my home. I fed the rest of Mason’s men to his pigs. There will be suspicions—but no reason for anyone to suspect us. We could, perhaps, be brought back to the scene, though. Do you think you’ll be able to handle that?”

Thinking, Will wonders the answer to that question. He figured so. Hannibal hadn’t died, so why should he get worked up returning there?

He’d read a good bit about PTSD, though. Being back in the setting where Will was convinced he’d watch his one and only lover die *may* not be the *best* idea.

Hannibal reads his mind, and shifts the conversation back to—“would you like to lay in bed, Love?”

The petname gives him a fluttery feeling inside. A bright smile forms on Will's face, and he nods.

-

Blue, soft cloth lay upon Will's body. He fingers the silky material, humming appreciatively. Since he was able to get out of the bath and change, he was much more in his head again.

Hannibal's hands fall onto his shoulders, rubbing considerate, harsh circles into them. Will groans in a mixture of pleasure and pain, muscles relaxing forcibly beneath the tension.

"I can't believe what happened today… *happened*," Will breathes, fighting the urge to fall asleep on the spot. For some reason, the massage moving backwards and down towards Will's middle-back were putting him to sleep. His nose scrunches up with confusion, deciding to ask a question that'd been on his mind since he saw Hannibal dangling in front of him. "How did you get caught?"

Roughly, hands push and grope at Will's (ticklish) waist. He squirms, smile teasing his lips.

"Mason's men barged in after my first patient. Was able to get off one, but Carlo was there, and he had a taser."

Will hums.

Hannibal circles around Will, hands coming up to start working Will's front.

"I must say," Hannibal starts, tone reluctant and afraid, "although I hate to be vulnerable, seeing you in that limo, unconscious, gave me a good fright. I was worried you'd already been…"

Will stares at Hannibal, surprised. It made sense that Hannibal didn't want Will to be *dead*, but hearing it felt surreal. Hannibal really did love him—loved him in a way he'd never loved before. Well, never loved since Mischa, probably.

"I'm alive, though," Will assures. "No damage… I don't think."

"I will never let anything like that happen again," Hannibal whispers, "I promise."

Will's eyes soften, even though *Hannibal* won't make eye contact with him. "You can't control everything that happens to us—or *me*—what matters is that we worked together and came out okay."

Hannibal shakes his head, "I wish I could agree. Perhaps I just have a natural inclination to control. I despise the consideration of what would've happened had I not successfully taken Carlo and his men out."

"You *did*, Hannibal. It's okay," Will reaches up, cradling Hannibal's face and making him look Will in the eyes, "we are *okay*."

Falling silent, Will and Hannibal stare at each other, working out Hannibal's guilt. His *shame*. *His fear*. Hannibal, eventually, breaks their eye contact to start fondling Will's muscles into relaxation again.

"What time is it?" Will asks, attempting to advert Hannibal's attention.

Hannibal takes the bait, allowing his mind to escape its worry. "Just about noon. Maybe one in the afternoon, I'd say. Why?"

Giving a hum, Will walks forward and embraces Hannibal. Hannibal stagers backward slightly, confused, but wraps Will in his arms anyway. Will snuggles into the broad chest, inhaling spice and security.

“Let’s hang out.”

Hannibal gives a small exhale out his nose in a laugh. “‘Hang out’?”

“Yes,” Will maneuvers to look up at Hannibal, chin resting on the man’s middle of his pecs.

Will accepts his fate.

“Make me codependent. Rely on me similarly. Do not make me have to question an existence without you in my life.” Hannibal’s eyes *sparkle*. “Make yourself my everything—and let me be yours.”

-

The rest of the day was spent exactly as Will had requested—the two inseparable. Hannibal canceled on his future patients for the day, giving Will his full availability.

It did, however, take a good while for the men to decide *what* to do. They laid in Hannibal’s bed, Hannibal shirtless and in his boxers, Will petting his chest hair in his (Hannibal’s) silk blue pajamas, discussing ideas. Will said things such as *fishing*, *dancing*, and, of course—*fucking*. Hannibal suggested *drawing* (Will couldn’t do this), *painting* (or that), or finding a museum to walk through together.

Ultimately, Will decided the last idea was a good compromise.

The museum that Hannibal took Will to was very high class. It had greek paintings and sculptures, so high that Will had to crane his neck to look at them. Hannibal put his hand on the small of Will’s back, guiding him through the museum and explaining things Will didn’t understand *before* or *after* the speech, and Will didn’t bother complaining or pointing out the P.D.A..

Who cared, really?

They spent *three hours* walking about the museum, then Hannibal had taken him out to dinner. This restaurant was *also* out of Will's price-range. Really, Will figured Hannibal was ensuring that Will didn't bother even asking to pay.

The dinner was French and *incredible*.

The town Hannibal had taken him to apparently was one of his favorites. Many high class people walked about the streets, and Will was grateful he was in a suit that Hannibal had gotten tailored for him (he begged him not to, but it seemed to have a purpose, now). It was very 'old-timey,' having old buildings and architecture which Hannibal described their significance to society to Will. Will, like in the museum, still didn't understand. But, seeing Hannibal excited was something he truly couldn't pass up.

Arriving back at Hannibal's home at six—or seven, Will was only very roughly keeping track—they called Abigail down. Will had suggested that they make dinner together to toast their alive-and-well-ness. Hannibal frowned at this, but gave in and allowed he and Abigail into his kitchen.

Luckily, with Hannibal's instructions, his kitchen did not end up *merely* as messy as Will's had when he cooked with Abigail. The food didn't come out as exquisitely, and Will and Abigail were still covered in flour, but the experience left Will feeling high and bubbly.

After tucking Abigail into bed ("*you don't*—shouldn't—*do that. She's not young anymore*."), Hannibal guided Will into his study. They'd idly chatted, Will roaming the small room admirably. When he'd taken thorough note of absolutely *everything*, he walked to where Hannibal was sketching away.

"Achilles lamenting the death of Patroclus," Hannibal clarifies, swiping away stray lead which had gathered on the pristine paper. Will glanced down at it, and noticed that 'Achilles' and 'Patroclus' looked much like Hannibal and Will. He smiles—then realizes Hannibal is processing his guilt—and stops. "Whenever he's mentioned in The Iliad, Patroclus seems to

be defined by his empathy," Hannibal continues, looking up at Will lovingly—admiring his alive-and-well-ness.

Will breaks the eye contact to admire the sketch below Hannibal's hands. Hannibal didn't seem to mind, starting to scratch at it with a pencil yet again.

"He became Achilles on the field of war. He died for him there, wearing his armor."

"He did. Hiding and revealing identity is a constant theme throughout the Greek epics."

"As are battle-tested friendships," Will replies.

Hannibal smiles, giving a faint nod. "Achilles wished all the Greeks would die, so that he and Patroclus could conquer Troy alone." Will watches as Hannibal delicately folds the sketch, horizontally, then vertically, and pushes it on his desk towards Will. His hand takes Will's, running a thumb over the back of Will's hand. Will smiles, and Hannibal matches the smile. "Took divine intervention to bring them down."

The metaphor works through Will, who, strangely enough, is so touched that tears burn behind his eyes. He breaks eye-contact, looking at the fire behind Hannibal.

"This isn't sustainable," Will complains. "We're going to get caught."

Hannibal's lips part with an audible click, rubbing his thumb over Will's hand again. "Jack already suspects you killed Freddie Lounds," Hannibal says, "because he doesn't know her whereabouts, anymore."

"If Jack told you he suspects me, that means he suspects *you*."

"I know."

Will gives a mischievous smirk towards the fire.

"You should give him what he wants," he suggests sinisterly.

Hannibal stiffens slightly—maybe not expecting Will to suggest killing off Jack.

Will thinks, personally, that's it's a great '*bang'* to go out with.

"Give him the Chesapeake Ripper?"

"Allow him closure. *Reveal yourself*," Will says, "you've taunted him for long enough. Let him *see you* with *clear eyes*."

Hannibal gives a playful smile, looking down at the folded drawing. "Jack has become my friend," he jokes. "I *suppose* I… Owe him the truth."

Glancing back at Hannibal, Will takes the gift of Achilles and Patroclus and pockets it gingerly. He'd have no where to put it, really, until they moved into their new home—but that was okay.

He leans down, Hannibal craning his neck upward, and their lips meet in a seal of trust and finality.

Chapter End Notes

I HOPE YOU ENJOYED!!!!

i've been subjected to a 4 page essay so i honestly can't promise i'll be super motivated to write this last chapter quickly. promise to get it out within like fooour days though….

Maybe… Lol….. okay bye

Mizumono

Chapter Summary

> As the time for their ‘big bang’ inches closer, Hannibal seems to no longer take interest in it. He suggests he, Will, and Abi should disappear into the night with nothing more than a polite note.
>
> Will says yes, of course.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

That same night, before he and Hannibal scurried off to bed, Hannibal wrote a dinner invite to Jack Crawford. Will sat on the desk in his study, legs dangling off the sides, watching. His handwriting was as posh and proper as he was. Will had seen it plentiful of times before—but seeing it *now* felt ironic.

Elegantly leading Jack to death.

After the note was finished, packed carefully into an envelope, and sent out, Will encouraged Hannibal up to bed.

“You know, Will,” Hannibal had started, taking off the gorgeous, black, three-piece suit he’d tailored for Will, “Jack Crawford is going to tell you about this. Perhaps even ask you to await him outside the door if he is to get hurt.”

A hum, and Will replies, “yes, probably. We will have a week to prepare, though. All should go well.”

Hannibal lays down each contents of the expensive suit, putting it away in his closet. He’d wrapped it in some sort of bag to prevent wrinkles and put it towards the side he and Hannibal looked at and confirmed would go with them to Florence. This makes Will smile.

“Not planning on taking his side, last second, are you?” Hannibal teases, stripping himself of his own suit.

Another hum, “don’t know. Could be a little interesting, hm?”

Hannibal sets up his own suit in his closet, taking out matching sets of pajamas from a nearby dresser. He turns, gives one set to Will, and kisses his forehead.

“Indeed,” he agrees.

Will’s smile is beautiful and broad. This time, next week, he’d be settled in a new home in Florence. Going by a different name, leading a different life.

Being, in his entirety, *Hannibal’s*.

And Hannibal, *his*.

They change facing each other, ending the motion by Hannibal feeling the silk on Will. This set was a dark red. Dark like blood, illuminating Will’s paling skin. Staying in with Hannibal so often seemed to be taking away his tan—Hannibal always promised that in Florence they’d get it darkened again.

Will always trusted.

The older man inched forward, his arms lowering to wrap around Will’s waist. Will hums appreciatively, wrapping his own arms around Hannibal’s neck. Hannibal bends down, picks Will up (Will only grunts and smiles), and carries him to bed.

“Who do you say we make for Jack Crawford and I’s dinner, Sweet Thing?” He asks, crawling over Will and settling between his legs. He kisses at Will’s jaw and neck.

Will knew, by now, that he was very spoiled by Hannibal. Things he never could’ve seen himself wearing—he wore. Things he never imagined doing—he did.

But if Hannibal had all these to give, who would Will be to deny?

“I say we’d figure it out. It could be left out completely—we don’t want to let any meat go to waste,” Will breathes, angling Hannibal’s head back at his own as to kiss him.

Hannibal hums. “You don’t think Jack Crawford will wait until after dinner?”

This causes Will to give a small giggle. “No. No, definitely not. He’s incredibly on edge—desperate to catch. I give it…” Will looks away, as though thinking, “ten? Fifteen minutes, inside?”

Hannibal exhales out a laugh, smiling broadly.

His erection is obvious—pressed narrowly beneath Will’s own. Their silk pajamas do no justice for them—they can feel everything. Vaguely, Will realizes just how easy Hannibal could be. All Will had to do was giggle and flutter his lashes below him and it was over.

In both points of view, they manipulated and belonged to each other.

-

The next morning, after a good breakfast at Hannibal’s home with he, *Hannibal*, and Abigail, Will sets off to go meet Jack. He’d gotten a simple text asking to meet up, and Will already knew what it was about.

Surely enough, as he enters Jack's office, the man gestures tiredly to the seats in front of it—letter on the desk. He swallows.

He looks *afraid*.

"Dr. Hannibal Lecter requests the pleasure of my company for dinner," Jack prompts, tone husky and exhausted. There was no doubt that Jack was still eager to catch him—perhaps only wishing he didn't have to put himself in imminent danger to do so. He stands, straightening himself up. "I'm wearing a wire," he says, "I have sharp shooters on the roofs of neighboring houses with lines of site to all the windows."

Well, that wouldn't matter.

'*It took divine intervention to bring them down*,' Hannibal's voice says in his head.

"He'll try to kill you," Will replies, "in the kitchen, for convenience. Make it easier to prepare the tartar."

Jack leans over, hands splaying on his desk. He burns holes into Will's eyes—who looks at his nose.

"Hannibal thinks you are his man in the room, I think you're mine," Jack says, intensity of the truth floating around them. "When the moment comes, will you do what needs to be done?"

"Yes," Will answers without hesitation.

-

After the sun roamed across the west, painting the sky with colors of orange and red and pink and yellow, to be replaced by the moon—white, amongst all black—Will returns to his home. He walks up the white porch to his door, feeling so foreign. He was no longer the man whom belonged to this house.

Barking resounds from inside the house. There were no dogs there anymore, but Will imagines that if there were, they would recognize Will as an intruder.

Will was more Hannibal than he was Will, nowadays. Hannibal was more Will than he was Hannibal, too. They melted and blended into one—inseparable. A new element, incapable of being broken down into less.

"Shh," a voice besides him soothes the dogs.

Looking over, Will meets the eyes of the dead Garrett Jacob Hobbs. He was sitting at the dingy table Will had set up outside his home, matted and bloody. When he sees Will notice him, he stands and approaches the railing around Will's porch. Will turns to join him—there's a sniper in his hand.

Curiosity pumps itself through Will's veins—when had that got there?

It's as he's looking down at it, that Hobbs whispers, "*see*?" Will glances over at him, then forward again to raise the sniper rifle. He peers into the scope as Hobbs says, "*see*."

There's a Ravenstag trotting about the depths of his forest. Will can see far, *far* into it with this sniper.

He could *see* all.

His hand finds the trigger, and he pulls.

A lone version of Hannibal dies. The only remnants were the facets of Hannibal which were tethered to him.

He and Hannibal—*one*.

-

Early in the morning, as Will makes himself breakfast, Hannibal had disappeared to visit Bella Crawford. Will didn't know why he even bothered—she didn't *like* him—but he appreciated his alone time anyway.

His food wasn't as pristine as the kind Hannibal would whip up for him—but that was okay.

All he needed was to pass time and stay healthy. He had a fight to win.

-

Later in the afternoon, Hannibal allowed Will to visit his office. He had little to no patients, so this worked perfectly.

Hannibal stalked about the library upstairs, throwing down sheet after sheet of notes about his patients. Will barely read them—he didn't want to—he only wanted to watch them burn.

Burning their past, moving to the future.

That's until a larger book, amongst the floating, elegant paper, falls down and into his hands. Will examines it—running his finger down the spine and turning it over to read.

He turns a couple of pages over in his hands, appreciating the feel of paper between his fingers, and notices that this patient is much more familiar to Will.

"These are your notes on me," Will points out, looking up to Hannibal.

Hannibal turns, pressing his side to the railing on the second floor—pretending he didn't know this. He hums. "So they are," he teases, smiling. He goes back to dropping notes down to Will.

Will sees, amongst notes, a clock. A horribly drawn one. There's a pang of remembrance where Will recalls Hannibal acting like the clock was fine—so Will wasn't taken out of the field, but could be used for curiosity. There's even notes about hiding his brain scans from him, so he thought what was happening to him was mental issues.

Sucking in a breath, Will lets go. He travels across the office of Hannibal Lecter, closing the book. It's as he stands in front of the yellow flames that he fondles the book—running his hands along the expensive leather.

He tosses it. It lights immediately, crackling the fire as it works to encompass it. Brown turns to crimson, licked by yellow, and rises as black ash.

Then, after a few good moments where the book has curled into itself, it disappears. It, and the fire, becoming one. The fire had consumed it.

There's a good sense of revival in Will's emotions.

Restoration.

He was anew.

The sound of Hannibal clattering books onto his table from behind him takes Will from his daze. He turns, watching as Hannibal stacks book atop book atop book.

"Don't your patients need these after you're gone?" Will asks. He rounds the desk, standing across from Hannibal.

"The FBI will pore over my notes if I left them intact. I will spare my patients the scrutiny. I'm dismantling who I was and moving it brick by brick."

As Hannibal tracks over to the fire, as Will had, Will goes to work by picking up some notes as well. He stands beside Hannibal, the two feeding old memories to the flame.

"When we've gone from this life," Hannibal says, "Jack Crawford and the FBI behind us," he turns, admiring his office. The one he'd never see again. "I will always have this place."

Will looks back with him. He, too, would always have this place.

"In your memory palace?" Will inquires.

"My palace is vast, even by medieval standards," Hannibal replies, turning to face Will (who copies), "The foyer is of Norman Chapel in Palermo. Severe, beautiful, and timeless. With a single reminder of mortality. A skull. Graven in the floor."

"All *I* need is… A stream," Will jokes, walking back to Hannibal's desk for more paper.

It was true, really. A body of water would do just fine by Will—it was all, besides Abigail and Hannibal, that he needed.

"In those moment where you can't overcome your surroundings, you can make it all go away."

“Put my head back, close my eyes, wade into the quiet of the stream,” Will replies, dreamily.

Hannibal smiles lovingly down at Will, who meets his eyes after a beat and smiles back.

“If I’m ever apprehended,” Hannibal starts, walking toward his desk to copy Will, “my memory palace will serve as more than a mnemonic system. I will live there.”

“Could you be happy there?” Will asks.

“All the path’s chambers are not lovely, light and bright. In the walls of our hearts and brains, danger waits. There are holes in the floor of the mind.”

With a small, comprehending hum, Will and Hannibal work around each other without much more conversation. They burn Hannibal’s past—*Will’s* past—and they move on.

-

“Alana wants to see me,” Will says, small furrow in his brow.

Hannibal looks up from across from him, glancing at Will and Abigail. They were enjoying some kind of fancy turkey sandwich, all eating in silence.

“Don’t we…” Abigail starts, “not really *like* Alana?”

“She is not the most fond of us,” Hannibal corrects, setting down his sandwich. “Since she doesn’t know which one of us did what murders—who was telling the truth, who was lying—she typically distances herself from both of our presences. Not that we haven’t been occupied with each other, anyway,” Hannibal finishes, smiling teasingly.

Will reciprocates it, though rolling his eyes. He swallows the contents complimenting his tongue, humming in appreciation as it sustains him.

"I guess, now that Jack has gotten Alana on my side, she trusts me enough to open up," Will shrugs, "I think, at least."

"Are you going to go see her?" Abigail asks. Hannibal, too, looks up to hear the answer.

After a brief moment of thought, Will replies, "yes. Yes, I think it could be nice."

"Reconnecting with old friends usually is," Hannibal agrees. "Indulge—while there's still time."

"Shall I invite her to next week's dinner?"

Hannibal looks off, then back. "No. She will probably find her way here anyway."

Will gives a hum and smile. "Yeah, you're right."

-

Alana sat across from Will, in Jack's office—but not in his mind.

"In the few jerky seconds of sleep I do get, all I see is dark, swarming behind my eyelids," Alana says. In Will's mind, she lay bare atop her bed, covered by a thing black blanket. As she speaks, Will imagines it sliding off of her. She's naked and vulnerable. Susceptible and *afraid*. The bed turns to pitch-black water—rising and rising—"I dream darkness comes into me." It rises level enough to hide one foot… Two… Her legs. "It comes and it's *insidious*." It

rises up and over her face—"Up my nose, into my ears." It consumes her, leaving nothing but water. Dark and not even remotely transparent. "I feel poisoned," she whispers.

"We've all been poisoned," Will says to her, back in Jack's office.

"You saw what no one else could," Alana replies.

Giving a small scoff, and a shake of head, Will replies, "all it took was the, uh, *traumatic*."

"We're still in the thick of it."

Reassuringly, Will leans forward and whispers, "we're getting through the worst of it."

She leans forward, too. "You've set some sort of trap and you're goading Hannibal into it. How can you be sure he's not goading you?"

"I can't," Will replies—playing along with game that Alana didn't know existed.

How silly, it was. At first, Will played his game with Hannibal to see if he could get him thrown in jail.

Now, he was on Hannibal's side—

Playing everyone else.

A silent tear rolls down Alana's cheek. Even though she didn't know Hannibal and Will were on the same side, she knew the night coming up would be catastrophic. It wouldn't really end well for anyone.

Will genuinely believes he and Hannibal will get away, yes, but it was unlikely that they'd come out unscathed.

Jack had quite the fisherman abilities, indeed.

It was too bad he was up against a better one.

-

At dinner, that night, Hannibal asks, "do you know what an imago is, Will?"

Will purses his lips. "It's a flying insect."

"It's the last stage of a transformation," Hannibal clarifies.

"When you become who you will be?" Will suggests.

"It's also a term from the dead religion of psychoanalysis. An imago is an image of a loved one, buried in the unconscious, carried with us all our lives."

"An ideal."

"The concept of an ideal… I have a concept of you, just as you have a concept of me."

"Neither of us are ideal."

“Both of us are too curious about too many things for *any* ideals.”

There’s a brief moment of silence. In its slumber—when Hannibal breaks it—he takes Will’s hand.

“Is it ideal that Jack die?” Hannibal asks.

Will turns his head curiously at Hannibal. He thinks it over, then replies, “it’s necessary. Less trouble down the road. What happens to Jack has been preordained.”

While Will takes a sip of wine, Hannibal falls silent again. Will has the briefest moment to question whether the man was debating on asking something. Or suggesting something.

His suspicions are proved true, as Hannibal says, “we could disappear now. Tonight. Could head to your home, leave a note for Alana and never see her or Jack again.” There’s a small smile, and Will feels his hand get minutely and quickly squeezed by Hannibal’s. “Almost polite.”

Will squeezes back.

The idea of taking out Jack—one last, big fight, was quite beautiful. A show of love and commitment.

But…

No. It… It really *wasn’t* that ideal.

They could always do it later—when Jack finds them. *If* he ever does.

Will breaks their eye contact to look at the food in front of him. “Then this would be our last supper,” he jokes.

Hannibal nods, sitting back and relaxing. Getting the proposal off of his chest seemed to do wonders for him. “Of this life,” he corrects. “I served lamb.”

“Sacrificial.”

“I don’t need a sacrifice. Do you?” Hannibal asks, drawing Will back into confirmation or rejection.

Will looks over at Hannibal, eyes soft and committed.

One.

“No,” Will says, and Hannibal’s smile brightens tenfold. “No, I do not.”

-

Sitting at his kitchen table, Will scribbles at a piece of parchment paper that Hannibal had gifted him. Abigail was walking about Will’s house—one that had become her second home (besides Hannibal’s) over the past handful of weeks. They’d done much fishing around here, and had so many deep, comforting conversations in this very kitchen. Abigail and Will were never going to be as intertwined as he and Hannibal were, but their closeness over the time they’ve spent has definitely increased. Speaking of Hannibal, the man was standing behind Will’s chair, rubbing soothing circles into his shoulders.

‘*Alana*,’ was all that Will had written so far. He bites his lip.

“Tell her, Mylimasis. Let go,” Hannibal encourages, giving a rough push downward. Will shuffled beneath the pressure; pain, pleasure, and relaxation mixing throughout his muscles.

They had a tendency to get sore.

"'S hard. Since today, she hadn't even really acted as though she liked me anymore," Will whispers.

"So give her one last comfort. She can move on from this, rest assured, be depolluted."

Will sighs.

Yes, yes that would do.

'*Alana*,

Hannibal and I have decided to set off and leave more amicably. We do ask you don't search for us, but we know it's unlikely that that wish will be fulfilled. Regardless, we bid you our polite goodbye, and pray the best for you. See you in another life, perhaps.

Will.'

He picks up the scribbled note, passing it up and over his shoulders. It's only a few seconds later that Hannibal hums. "Very good," he praises.

With the confirmation, Will folds the note carefully and rises from his seat. He crosses to his kitchen, lying down the note for Alana to find. Distantly, he hears Hannibal disappear to go and find Abigail.

The past couple of months were so *bizarre* to Will.

At the very start of it all, Will was behind bars, because of Hannibal.

Then, for whatever reason, Hannibal freed Will. He still remembers the flowers that blossomed in his tummy at the sight of the bright sun. The way his dogs went *bat shit* crazy at the sight of him.

When Jack had told him he believed Will, and entrusted Will to help him catch Hannibal, Will felt so *powerful*. He had Jack, the FBI, and Hannibal *himself* wrapped around his finger. Even now, Hannibal would have no way of escape if the cops were to appear on the scene and arrest him. Course, Hannibal would have no reason to be arrested—no proof—but it was the thought that counted.

In the process of baiting Hannibal, Will *fell in love*. He was baited right back, taken under Hannibal's wing, and found he quite liked the warmth there. It sounds depressing putting it this way—that Will was manipulated into Hannibal's side exactly as he tried to do vice versa—that Will *lost*. But it wasn't, really. There was nothing depressing about Will's situation. He evolved, found peace in Hannibal's violence, and realized he didn't have to be alone anymore.

"Will?"

Will turns from the window of his house he was looking out upon, meeting Abigail and Hannibal. He smiles warily.

Oh, God, why —

Abigail and Hannibal's brows crease downward in almost the same motion—concern.

"Will?" Hannibal says now, not hesitating to gather Will up into his arms.

That was no help—Will feels tears come readily.

“I’m sorry,” he croaks, shaking his head against Hannibal’s chest. Another set of arms wrap around Will, a smaller body pressed to his backside. Will was effectively sandwiched between the two, *only* people he had ever loved. The only two he’d ever *love*.

“We could still settle back in and wait, if you’d prefer, Will. I would understand,” Hannibal condoles, petting Will’s hair.

“Yeah, Will,” Abigail agrees to relax Will.

Giving another shake of his head, Will replies, “no, no—I’m okay. I just… It’s… Nevermind me. I’m okay, really.”

Hannibal tightens his hand in Will’s hair ever-so-slightly to encourage it backward. Will lets himself be guided, meeting beautiful red eyes.

“I love you,” he breathes.

Hannibal’s eyes soften. “I love you.”

“I love you, Will,” Abigail says from behind him. Will’s heart gives a pleasant flutter to the words.

“I *love you both*, so much.”

-

“Everything onboard?” Asks one of Hannibal’s men. Apparently, Hannibal had a very thorough escape plan. He ‘*knew a guy*’ who was too afraid of Hannibal to rat out that he’d helped him across to Florence on a boat, so they used that as their means of travel.

Will racks his mind to make sure he had everything. He turns his head, where even through the soft rocking of the boat, a clear past stood behind him.

Everything was gone—Will was leaving.

Giving a soft, renewed smile, Will turns back to Hannibal, Abigail, and Hannibal's man. He nods.

"Yeah," he whispers in confirmation.

Hannibal's hand finds the small of his back, guiding him further into the boat. Abigail holds his hand from his other side.

Will and his family were gone. Safe.

Restored.

Chapter End Notes

im so glad this is over LMFAOOO. god, writing this last chapter felt like a fever dream almost. im so happy it's done and i love how far it's come, as well as how it's ended. i hope you guys enjoyed this journey as much as me.

pls check my other works!!! i've got a fantasy hannigram AU in the works rn, and i think that if you liked this, you might like that too! i'll make some one-shots here and there, too, and i'm open to requests!!! so, if you have an idea you've never seen written before, but don't wanna write yourself, and Perhaps enjoy my writing, let me know! i need motivation… Lol….

luv u guyz fr <3

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